



epicTM

ILLUSTRATED

special
preview:

REVENGE
OF THE
JEDI



©1982-P. CRAIG RUSSELL

featuring:

Michael Moorcock's
ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ
an all-new graphic novel



epic

ILLUSTRATED

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you should have thought of that before we left
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painting ©1982 P. Craig Russell

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MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S

ELRIC

OF MELNIBONÉ

SCRIPT: ROY THOMAS

ART: P. CRAIG RUSSELL

LETTERING: TOM ORZECOWSKI



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EPIC 9

ELRIC

WHILE GODS LAUGH

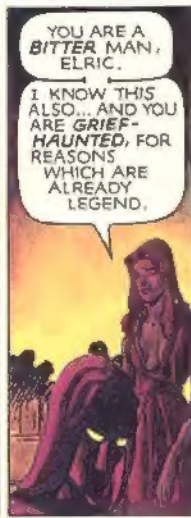
ADAPTED FOR COMICS BY ROY THOMAS & CRAIG RUSSELL

MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S A TALE OF ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ

WIKES - ARTIST

• HIS ENCHANTED RINGESWORD STORMBRINGER, ALSO CALLED STEALER OF SOULS •

ONE NIGHT, AS ELRIC SITS ALONE IN A TAVERN, A WINGLESS WOMAN OF MYRRH GLIDES OUT OF THE STORM TO REST HER LITHE BODY AGAINST HIM...





I AM CALLED AN **EVIL** MAN, LADY, AND MY DESTINY IS **HELL-DOOMED**... BUT I AM NOT UNWISE, NOR UNFAIR.

LET ME REMIND YOU A LITTLE OF THE **TRUTH**. CALL THIS LEGEND, IF YOU PREFER-- I DO NOT CARE.

A WOMAN-- MY COUSIN CYMORIL, WHOM I LOVED-- **DIED** A YEAR AGO, ON THE BLADE OF MY TRUSTY SWORD.

SINCE THEN I HAVE COURTED NO WOMAN AND DESIRED NONE.

WHY SHOULD I **BREAK** SUCH SECURE HABITS?



IF ASKED, I GRANT YOU THAT I COULD SPEAK POETRY TO YOU...

...AND THAT YOU'VE A GRACE AND BEAUTY WHICH MOVES ME TO INTERESTING SPECULATION...

...BUT I WOULD NOT LOAD ANY PART OF MY **DARK BURDEN** UPON ONE AS EXQUISITE AS YOU.

I SHOULD ADMIT THAT I **SCREAM** IN MY SLEEP SOMETIMES... AND AM OFTEN TORTURED BY INCOMMUNICABLE **SELF-LOATHING**.

GO WHILE YOU CAN, LADY, AND **FORGET** ELRIC...

...FOR HE CAN BRING ONLY **GRIEF** TO YOUR SOUL.



NO.
NO, I WILL NOT.



COME WITH ME.





ELRIC COULD NOT SAY WHY HE HAS ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE LED OUT INTO THE WILD, RAINLESS STORM WHICH HOWLS ABOUT THE FILKHARIAN CITY OF RASCHIL.

BUT HE FEELS UNCOMFORTABLY DRAWN TO THIS CALM-EYED WOMAN WHO WASTES FEW WORDS.

WHO ARE YOU, LADY?

I AM SHAARILLA OF THE DANCING MIST, WINGLESS DAUGHTER OF A DEAD NECROMANCER...

...A CRIPPLE IN MY OWN LAND, AND THUS AN OUTCAST.

YOU HAVE HEARD, ELRIC, OF THE DEAD GODS' BOOK?

OF COURSE. MEN SAY IT HOLDS A HOLY AND MIGHTY WISDOM WHICH EVERY SORCERER DESIRES TO SAMPLE.

BUT IT IS BELIEVED DESTROYED...

... HURLED INTO THE SUN WHEN THE OLD GODS WERE DYING.

ANOTHER LEGEND SPEAKS VAGUELY OF DARK ONES WHO INTERRUPTED ITS SUNWARD COURSE, BUT MOST SCHOLARS DISCOUNT SUCH TALES...

... ARGUING THAT, IF IT STILL EXISTED, THE BOOK WOULD HAVE COME TO LIGHT BY THIS TIME.



WHY DO YOU MENTION THE BOOK?



I KNOW THAT IT EXISTS... AND I KNOW WHERE IT IS.

MY FATHER ACQUIRED THE KNOWLEDGE JUST BEFORE HE DIED.



MYSELF... AND THE BOOK... YOU MAY HAVE IF YOU HELP ME GET IT.

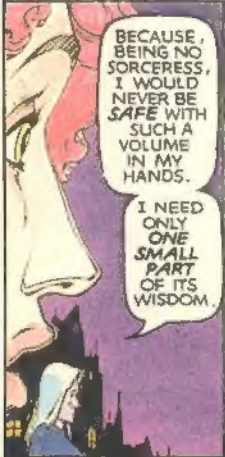


COULD THE SECRET OF PEACE BE CONTAINED IN THE BOOK? ELRIC WONDERS.



WILL HE, IF HE FINDS IT, BE ABLE TO DISPENSE AT LAST WITH HIS RUNESWORD STORMBRINGER, WHICH RULES HIS LIFE LIKE A MUTE TYRANT?

IF YOU WANT THE BOOK SO BADLY THAT YOU SEEK MY HELP, WHY DO YOU NOT WISH TO KEEP IT?



BECAUSE, BEING NO SORCERESS, I WOULD NEVER BE SAFE WITH SUCH A VOLUME IN MY HANDS.

I NEED ONLY ONE SMALL PART OF ITS WISDOM.



OH? AND WHAT IS THAT?



WHEN WE HAVE THE BOOK, YOU WILL HAVE YOUR ANSWER.

NOT BEFORE.

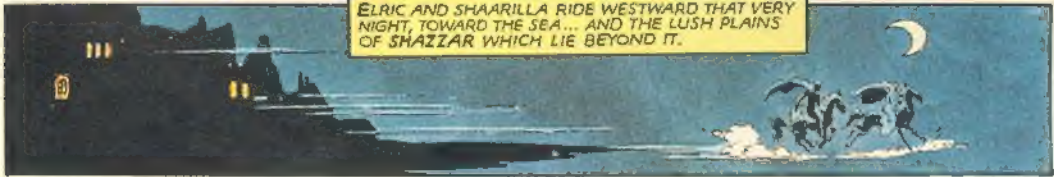


THAT ANSWER IS GOOD ENOUGH...



...AND IT APPEALS TO ME.

HALF BEFORE HE REALIZES IT, HE HAS PRESSED HIS COLORLESS LIPS TO HER SCARLET MOUTH.



ELRIC AND SHAAIRILLA RIDE WESTWARD THAT VERY NIGHT, TOWARD THE SEA... AND THE LUSH PLAINS OF SHAZZAR WHICH LIE BEYOND IT.

ONE GLOOMY NIGHT, THEY HAVE REACHED THE BORDERS OF THE SILENT LAND BEYOND EVEN SHAZAAR... AND THERE THEY PITCH THEIR SILKEN TENT.

ARE ALL THE STORIES OF THE SILENT LAND TRUE, ELRIC?

ITS INHABITANTS ARE INHUMAN AND FEARED... THIS I KNOW.

THE MEN OF SHAZZAR HAVE NEVER DARED PUSH THEIR BORDERS FURTHER WEST, AND EVEN MY MYSTIC ANCESTORS NEVER RULED ITS MARSHY WASTES.

'TIS SAID ITS DENIZENS ARE AN EVIL, DYING RACE.

UNHUMAN, ARE THEY? THEN WHAT OF MY PEOPLE, WHO ARE RELATED TO THEM?

WHAT OF ME, ELRIC?

YOU'RE HUMAN ENOUGH FOR ME.

NO COMPLIMENT.

BUT I'LL TAKE IT FOR ONE...

...UNTIL YOUR GLIB TONGUE FINDS A BETTER...!

THUNDER RUMBLES OVER DISTANT MOUNTAINS LIKE THE LAUGHTER OF FAR-OFF GODS.

THAT NIGHT, THEY SLEEP, BUT REST LESSLY...

AT ONCE, ELRIC SCREAMS OUT, WIDE-EYED IN HIS GRIM SLEEP.

CYMRIL!

STARING SKYWARD, HE MURMURS OTHER WORDS IN A SIBILANT LANGUAGE WHICH MAKES SHAARILLA BLOCK HER EARS...

AND SHUDDER.

NEXT MORNING, AS THEY BREAK CAMP, SHAARILLA AVOIDS LOOKING AT ELRIC DIRECTLY, NOR DOES HE MAKE ANY MOVE TO SPEAK TO HER.

AT LAST, IN A TIMOROUS VOICE...

WHY DO YOU DESIRE THE DEAD GODS' BOOK, ELRIC?

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WILL FIND IN IT?

VERY WELL, THEN, IF YOU INSIST: I DESIRE TO KNOW ONE OF TWO THINGS.

AND WHAT IS THAT?

CAN AN ULTIMATE GOD EXIST--OR NOT?

THE LORDS OF LAW AND CHAOS NOW GOVERN OUR LIVES... BUT IS THERE SOME BEING GREATER THAN THEY?

LYING AWAKE AT NIGHT, MY MIND GOES OUT, SEARCHING THROUGH BLACK BARRENNESS FOR SOMETHING--ANYTHING--WHICH WILL TAKE ME TO IT, WARM ME, PROTECT ME, TELL ME THERE IS ORDER IN THE CHAOTIC TUMBLE OF THE UNIVERSE...

...THAT THE PRECISION OF THE PLANETS IS NOT SIMPLY A BRIEF, BRIGHT SPARK OF SANITY IN AN ETERNITY OF MALEVOLENT ANARCHY.

WITHOUT SOME CONFIRMATION, MY ONLY COMFORT IS TO ACCEPT--NAY, TO REVEL IN THE ANARCHY--TO KNOW, WITHOUT FEAR, THAT WE ARE DOOMED FROM THE START.

IF THE BOOK TELLS ME OTHERWISE, I SHALL GLADLY BELIEVE IT.

UNTIL THEN, I WILL PUT MY TRUST ONLY IN MY SWORD... AND MYSELF.

COULD IT NOT JUST BE THAT YOU FEAR THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR OWN RECENT ACTS, ELRIC?

IS IT NOT MORE COMFORTING FOR YOU TO BELIEVE IN DESERTS WHICH ARE RARELY JUST?

PERHAPS.

I DO NOT KNOW.

THAT IS THE ONLY REAL TRUTH, SHAARILLA.

I DO NOT KNOW.

I AM A MAN POSSESSED... AND WITHOUT THIS DEVIL-BLADE I CARRY...

...I WOULD NOT BE A MAN AT ALL.

CHAPTER 2

MOUNTING THEIR SWIFT STEEDS, THE PAIR OF ADVENTURERS SPUR THEM WITH ABANDONED SAVAGERY DOWN THE HILLSIDE, TOWARD THE MARSH WHICH BORDERS THE SILENT LAND.

AND BEFORE THE HORSES CAN HALT, THEIR HOOVES HAVE SPLASHED SUDDENLY INTO--

BOG!

KEEP BACK, SHAAIRILLA! IF YOU GET CAUGHT--!

WELL? HOW DO WE CROSS?

THERE WAS A MAP...

WHERE IS IT?

I LOST IT! BUT I TRIED HARD TO MEMORIZE IT--AND I THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO GET US SAFELY ACROSS.

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME OF THIS BEFORE?

I'M SORRY, ELRIC... BUT FOR A WHOLE DAY, JUST BEFORE I FOUND YOU, MY MEMORY WAS GONE.

WHEN I CAME TO MYSELF, THE MAP WAS MISSING!

THERE IS SOME FORCE WORKING AGAINST US, I AM SURE... THOUGH I KNOW NOT WHAT IT IS.

LET US HOPE YOUR MEMORY IS NOT TOO FAULTY NOW.

THESE MARSHES ARE INFAMOUS THE WORLD OVER... BUT, BY ALL ACCOUNTS, ONLY NATURAL HAZARDS WAIT FOR US.

THERE'S A NARROW PATH, I REMEMBER, THAT LEADS OUT INTO THE MARSH...

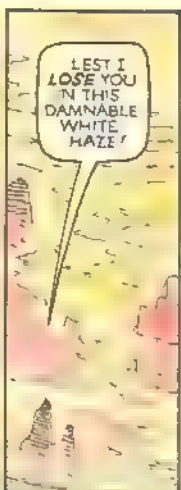


I'D BEST GO FIRST

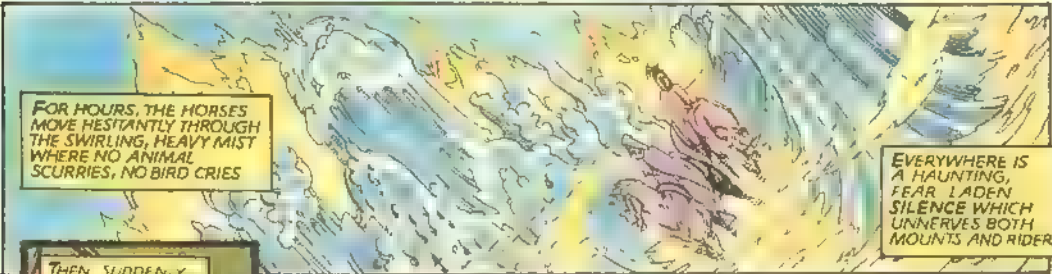
AYE



BUT STAY CLOSE...

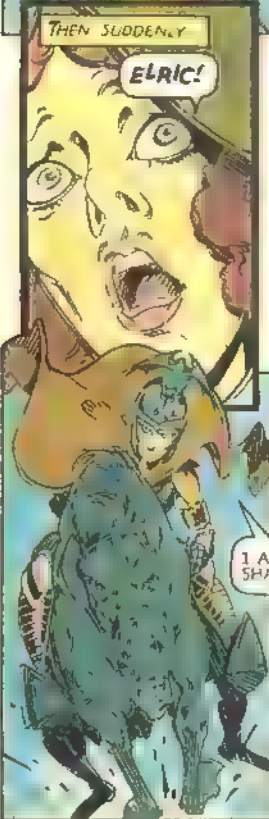


LEST I LOSE YOU IN THIS DAMNABLE WHITE HAZE!



FOR HOURS, THE HORSES MOVE HESITANTLY THROUGH THE SWIRLING, HEAVY MIST WHERE NO ANIMAL SCURRIES, NO BIRD CRIES

EVERYWHERE IS A HAUNTING, FEAR LADEN SILENCE WHICH UNNERVES BOTH MOUNTS AND RIDERS



THEN SUDDENLY

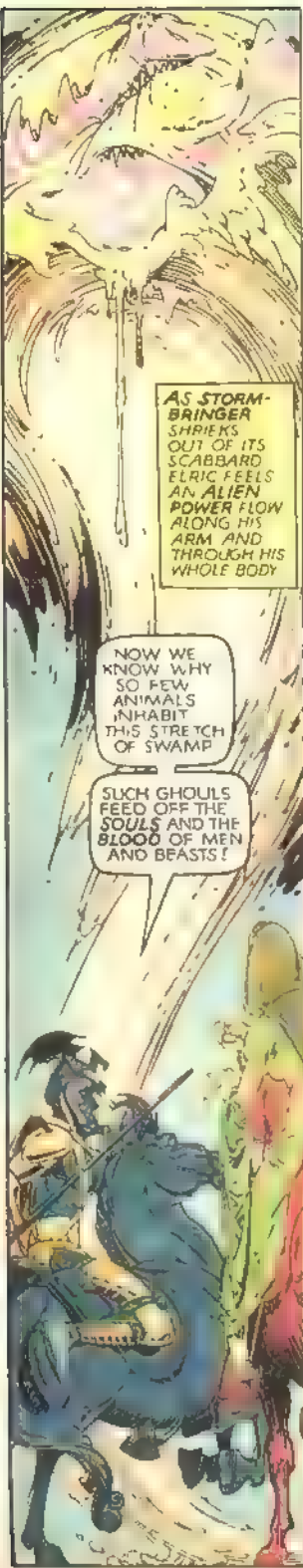
ELRIC!



SOMETHING STIRS AMONG THE WHITENESS-- THERE!

A MIST GIANT!

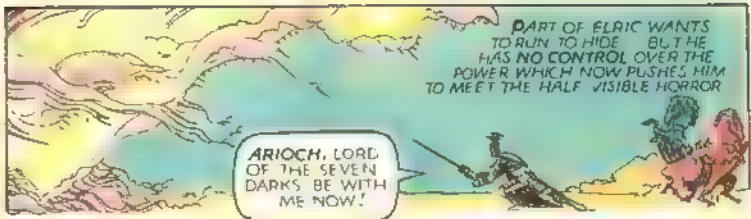
I AM HERE, SHAAIRILLA



AS STORM-BRINGER SHRIEKS OUT OF ITS SCABBARD ELRIC FEELS AN ALIEN POWER FLOW ALONG HIS ARM AND THROUGH HIS WHOLE BODY

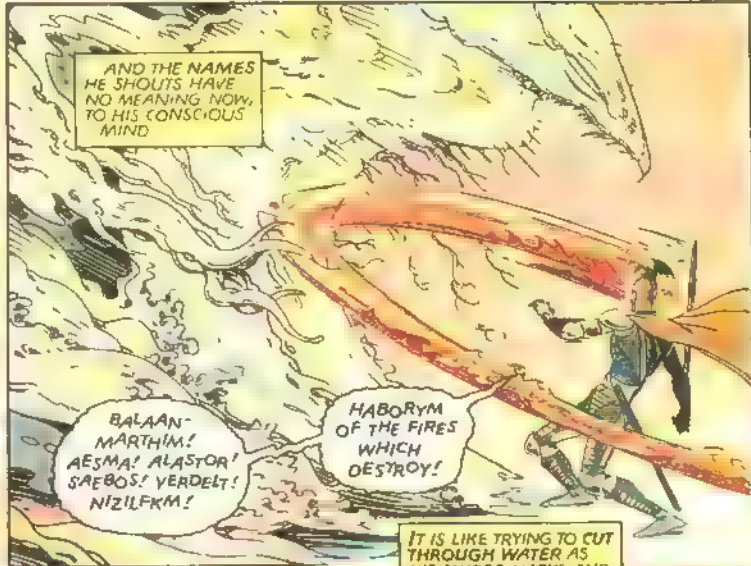
NOW WE KNOW WHY SO FEW ANIMALS INHABIT THIS STRETCH OF SWAMP

SUCH GHOULS FEED OFF THE SOULS AND THE BLOOD OF MEN AND BEASTS!



PART OF ELRIC WANTS TO RUN TO HIDE BUT HE HAS NO CONTROL OVER THE POWER WHICH NOW PUSHES HIM TO MEET THE HALF VISIBLE HORROR

ARIOCH, LORD OF THE SEVEN DARKS BE WITH ME NOW!

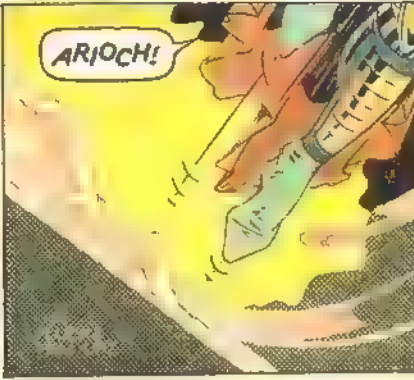
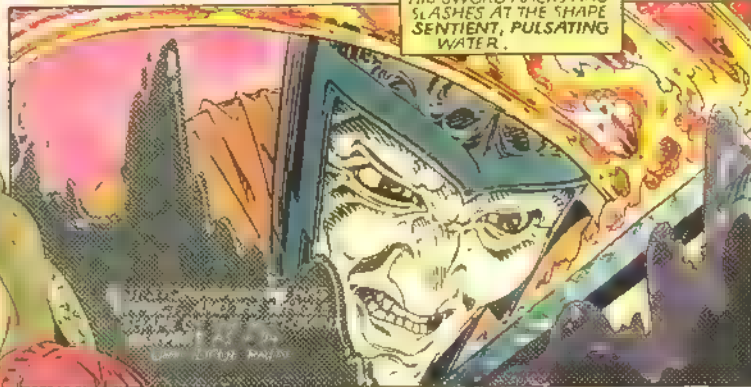


AND THE NAMES HE SHOUTS HAVE NO MEANING NOW, TO HIS CONSCIOUS MIND

BALAN-MARTHIM! AESMA! ALASTOR! SAEBOS! VERDELT! NIZILFKM!

HABORYM OF THE FIRES WHICH DESTROY!

IT IS LIKE TRYING TO CUT THROUGH WATER AS HIS SWORD HACKS AND SLASHES AT THE SHAPE SENTIENT, PULSATING WATER.



ARIOCH!

HE IS BLINDED NOW
BY THE NEARNESS OF
THE COLORLESS THING
THAT HOLDS HIM
DANGLING

AND HE
CRIES THE
NAMES
AGAIN--

BALAN--
MARTHIM!

AS STORM
BRINGER
SINGS AN
EVIL SONG

AESMA!
SAEBOX!
ALASTOR!

INCH BY INCH

VERDELT!
NIZIFKM!

TOWARD ITS
GAPING MAW

WHEN A MIND TOUCHES
ELRIC'S A WILD SARDOONIC
POWERFUL

AND HE KNOWS THAT
ARIOCH RESPONDS AT LAST!

EVEN AS HE FEELS THE
MIST GIANT WEAKEN
ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY--

-ELRIC STRIKES
AGAIN AND AGAIN
STRIKES BLINDLY,
AGONY PIERCING
EVERY NERVE
OF HIS FRAIL
ALB NO BODY



NEXT
MOMENT,
SUDDENLY,
HE IS
FALLING.

AND HE BEGINS TO SINK

ERIC! YOU'RE IN THE
MARSH! DON'T MOVE!



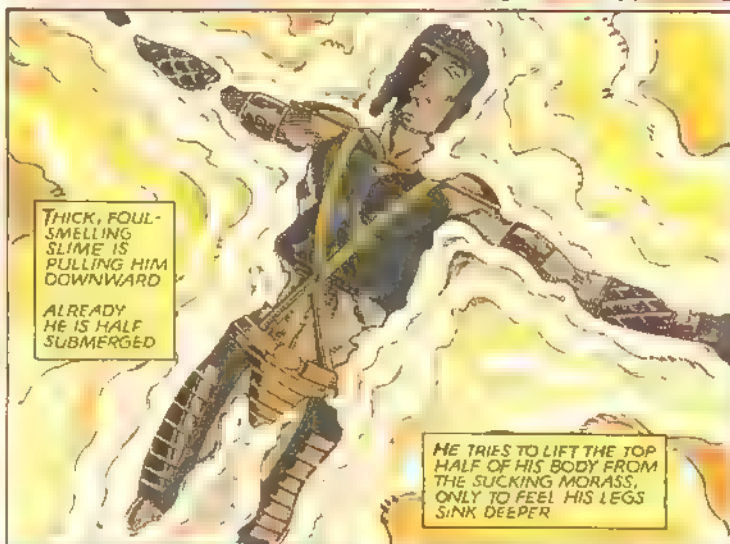
HE SMILES
TO HIMSELF
WHY SHOULD
HE MOVE?

DOWN HE IS
SINKING, SLOWLY,
CALMLY, INTO THE
WELCOMING MARSH

WAS THERE
ANOTHER
TIME LIKE
THIS
ANOTHER
MARSH?



ABRUPTLY, WITH A
MENTAL JOLT FULL
AWARENESS OF THE
SITUATION COMES
BACK TO HIM



THICK, FOUL-
SMELLING
SLIME IS
PULLING HIM
DOWNWARD

ALREADY
HE IS HALF
SUBMERGED

HE TRIES TO LIFT THE TOP
HALF OF HIS BODY FROM
THE SUCKING MORASS,
ONLY TO FEEL HIS LEGS
SINK DEEPER

ERIC!
DON'T MOVE,
PLEASE.

END

SHAARILLA--!

HE SEEMS TO FALL FOR
HOURS, SLOWLY, WEIGHT-
LESSLY, TILL HE LANDS
UPON A SURFACE WHICH
YIELDS BENEATH HIM.

A
ROPE!

THROW ME
A ROPE--
THEN TIE
IT TO THE
HORSE!

GOOD! NOW
PULL, HORSE--
CURSE YOU--

PULL!

IT WAS DREAD
FUL, ELLRIC!
YOU SEEMED TO
DISAPPEAR--
AND WHEN YOU
SCREAMED THAT
NAME--!

WHAT
NAME?

IT
DOESN'T
MATTER,
NOW

I AM SURE THAT
FAR-BORN
MIST-GIANT WAS
SENT HERE-- I
KNOW NOT BY
WHOM OR WHAT.

WE MUST
GET TO
FIRMER
GROUND
WHILE
WE CAN

WHICH
WAY?

BACK
OR
FOR-
WARD?

FORWARD,
OF COURSE
FOR ALREADY
STORM
BRINGER'S
POWER
RENEWES
MY OWN

WHY
DO YOU
ASK?

FOR NO
REASON

LET'S
HURRY
THEN

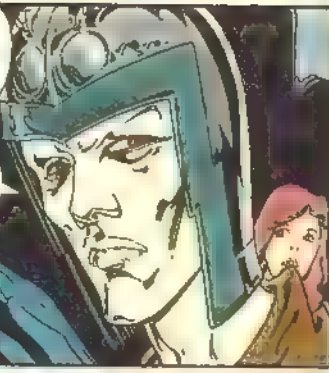
MOUNTING THEIR
STEEDS AGAIN, THEY
RIDE WITH LITTLE CAUTION.

“UNTIL THE MARSH
AND ITS CLOAK OF
MIST IS WELL
BEHIND THEM



SOMETHING COMES TOWARD JS POSS BLY MORE ENEMIES

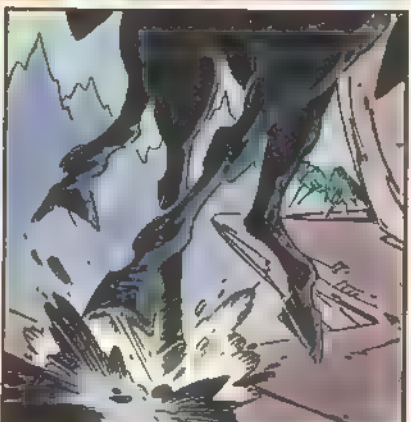
SHELTER THERE, SHAARI, LA



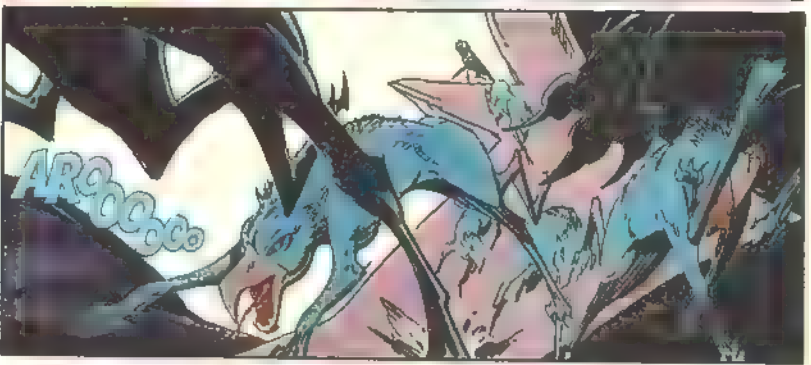
WITH LUCK, THEY'LL PASS US BY

By the fifth day they ride through barren, rocky country whose ground, made slippery by recent rains, forces them to ride more slowly

AROOOO



ERIC-- WHAT'S THAT BAYING?

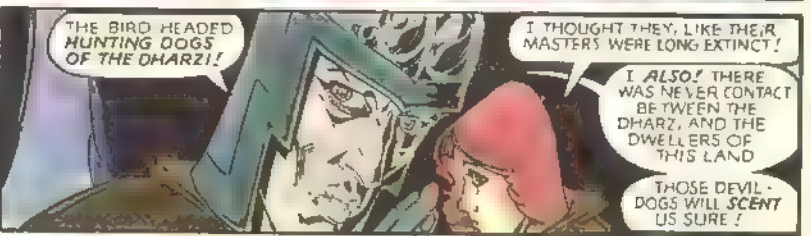


THE BIRD HEADED HUNTING DOGS OF THE DHARZ!

I THOUGHT THEY, LIKE THEIR MASTERS WERE LONG EXTINCT!

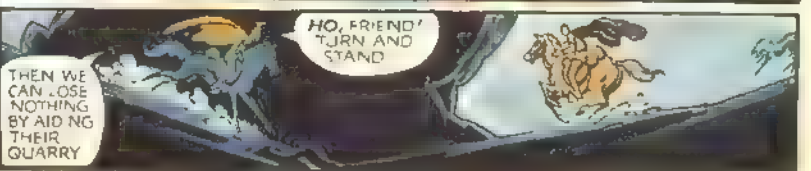
I ALSO! THERE WAS NEVER CONTACT BETWEEN THE DHARZ, AND THE DWELLERS OF THIS LAND

THOSE DEVIL DOGS WILL SCENT US SURE!



HO, FRIEND! TURN AND STAND

THEN WE CAN JOSE NOTHING BY AID NG THEIR QUARRY



--I'M
HERE TO
AID YOU

A LUCKY
CHANCE,
THEN, THIS
MEETING

FOR YONDER ARE THE
MASTERS OF THE DEMON
BEASTS WHO PURSUE
ME!

ARIOCH! THOSE
ARE THE LORDS
OF DHARZI--
DEAD THESE
TEN CENTURIES!

WE'RE
FIGHTING
DEAD MEN?

AYE AND
THE TOO
TANGIBLE
GHOSTS OF
THEIR DOGS!

TANGIBLE ENOUGH,
HAPPILY, FOR MY SWORD
STORMBRINGER TO
DISPATCH A FEW OF
THEM.

AND MY
OWN!

THEY DIE
AGAIN, IF
DEAD THEY
WERE BE
FORE

-- BUT
THERE
ARE SO
MANY OF
THEM!

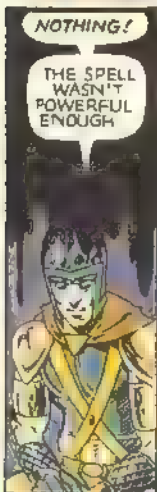
TOO MANY!
WE'RE
DOOMED,
MY FRIEND

--UNLESS
I CAN FIND
A SORCEROUS
MEANS TO
DEFEAT
THEM!



THE SPELL FOR WHICH HE RACKS HIS BRAIN COMES TO HIM AND-- HOPING THE FORCES HE MUST INVOKE WILL DECIDE TO AID HIM-- ELRIC BEGINS HIS CHANT

"Let the Laws which govern all things Not so lightly be dismissed ... Let the Ones who flaunt the Earth-Kings With a fresher death be kissed!"



NOTHING!

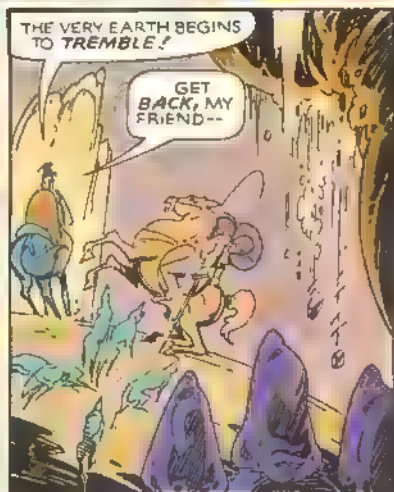
THE SPELL WASN'T POWERFUL ENOUGH



I'VE FAILED.



WELL, IT SEEMS WE GO BACK TO FIGHTING FOR OUR...EH?

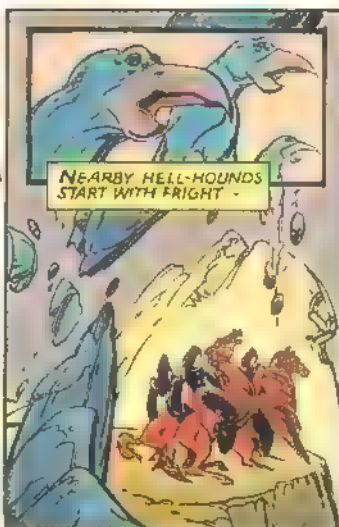


THE VERY EARTH BEGINS TO TREMBLE!

GET BACK, MY FRIEND--



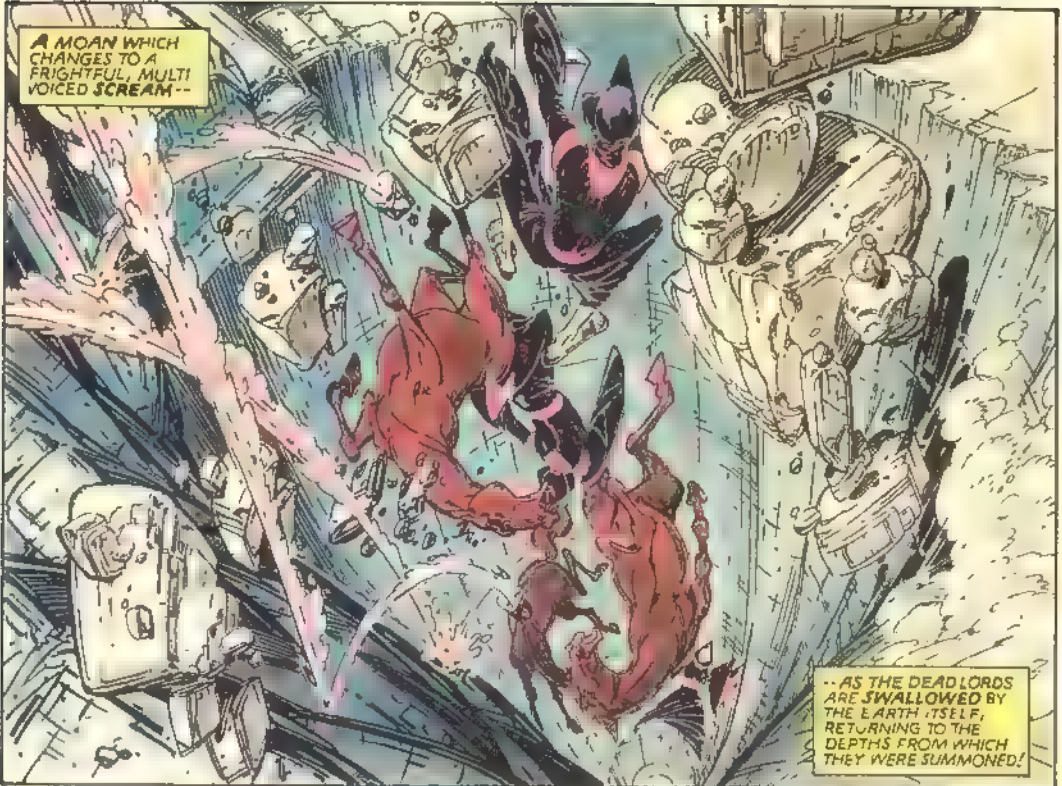
-- OR WE'LL PERISH WITH THEM!



NEARBY HELL-HOUNDS START WITH FRIGHT -



AND A LOW, INARTICULATE MOAN COMES FROM THE LIPS OF THE LIVING DEAD.



A MOAN WHICH
CHANGES TO A
FRIGHTFUL, MULTI-
VOICED SCREAM--

-- AS THE DEAD LORDS
ARE SWALLOWED BY
THE EARTH ITSELF,
RETURNING TO THE
DEPTHS FROM WHICH
THEY WERE SUMMONED!

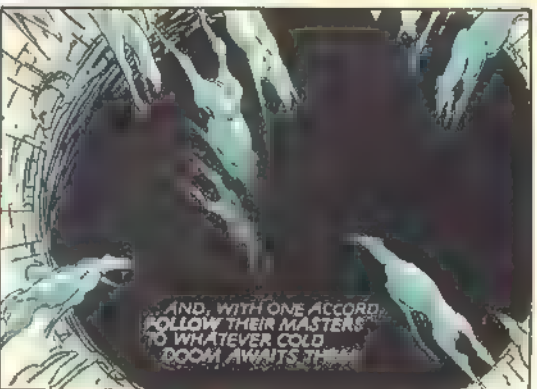


A DEEP, UNHOLY CHUCKLE ARISES
FROM THE SHATTERED PIT

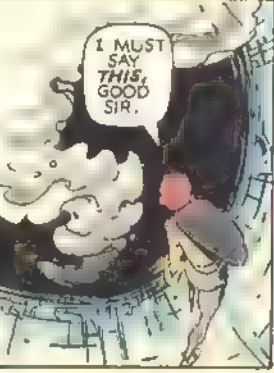
THE MOCKING LAUGHTER OF
THE EARTH KINGS, TAKING
THEIR RIGHTFUL PREY BACK
INTO THEIR KEEPING



WHINING,
THE
DEVIL
DOGS
SLINK
TOWARD
THE PIT'S
EDGE...



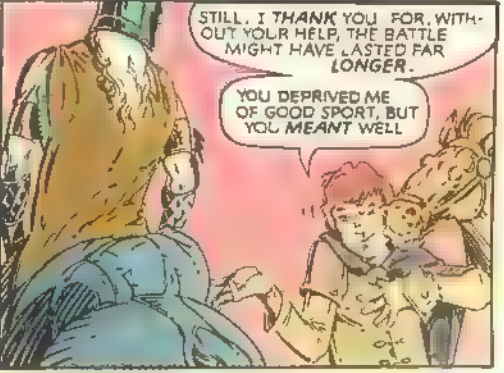
AND, WITH ONE ACCORD
FOLLOW THEIR MASTERS
TO WHATEVER COLD
DOOM AWAITS THEM



I MUST
SAY
THIS,
GOOD
SIR.



YOU ARE ON
FAMILIAR TERMS
WITH THE STRANGEST
PEOPLE.



STILL, I THANK YOU FOR, WITH-
OUT YOUR HELP, THE BATTLE
MIGHT HAVE LASTED FAR
LONGER.

YOU DEPRIVED ME
OF GOOD SPORT, BUT
YOU MEANT WELL



OH AND BY THE BY
MOONGLUM IS MY
NAME



AN INTERESTING
NAME AND THE
LADY?

ELRIC OF
MELNIBONÉ,
I

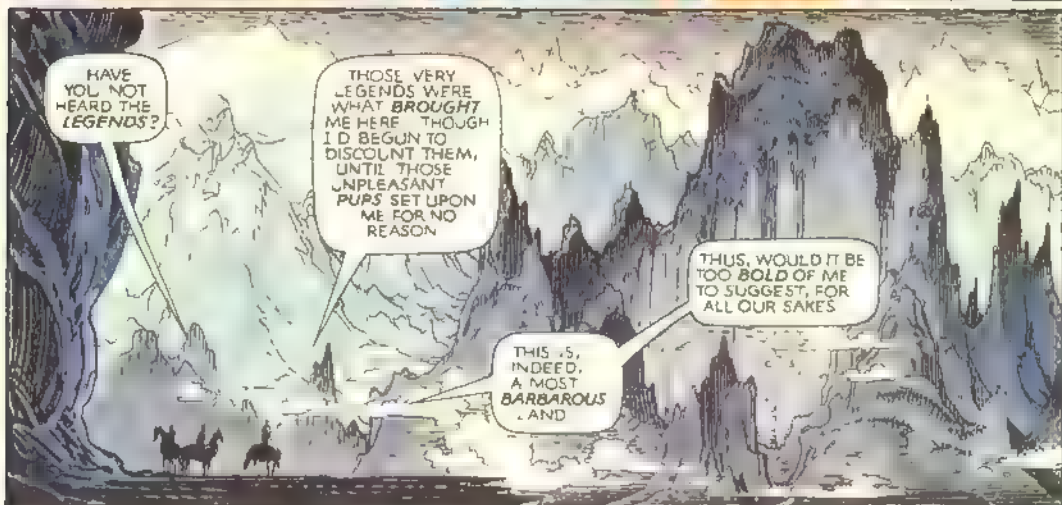


THE LADY
SHAARILLA--
MASTER
MOONGLUM
OF ?



OF ELWHER,
THE MERCHANT
CAPITAL OF THE EAST
AND THE
FINEST CITY
IN THE
WORLD

BUT WHY DO YOU
TRAVEL **THESE**
PARTS S.R.?

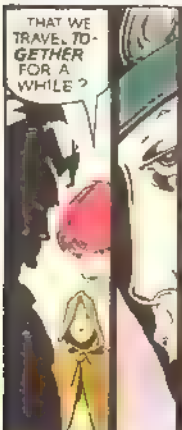


HAVE
YOU NOT
HEARD THE
LEGENDS?

THOSE VERY
LEGENDS WERE
WHAT **BROUGHT**
ME HERE THOUGH
I'D BEGUN TO
DISCOUNT THEM,
UNTIL THOSE
UNPLEASANT
PUPS SET UPON
ME FOR NO
REASON

THUS, WOULD IT BE
TOO **BOLD** OF ME
TO SUGGEST, FOR
ALL OUR SALES

THIS IS,
INDEED,
A MOST
BARBAROUS
LAND



THAT WE
TRAVEL TO-
GETHER
FOR A
WHILE?



VERY WELL, FRIEND MOON-
GLUM. SINCE THREE ARE
STRONGER THAN TWO, WE'D
APPRECIATE YOUR COMPANY

WE'RE
TOWARD THE
MOUNTAINS

AND WHAT
DO YOU
SEEK
THERE?



A
SECRET



SHAARILLA
SULKING.
SAYS
NOTHING



AND THEIR NEWFOUND
COMPANION IS DISCREET
ENOUGH TO CEASE
FURTHER QUESTIONING

CHAPTER 3

THUS THEY RIDE TOWARD THE BLACK MOUNTAIN BARRIER WHICH RISES OVER THE WORLD LIKE A BROODING GOD. .

WHERE LIGHTNING SMASHES DOWNWARDS LIKE A MONSTER FINGER SEARCHING THE EARTH FOR GRUBS.

ELRIC--LET US GO BACK, I BEG YOU

FORGET THE BOOK!

WELL? ARE YOU DEAF, THAT YOU HEAR NOT MY WORDS?

WE WILL NEVER REACH THE BOOK! TURN BACK, ELRIC!

THERE ARE TOO MANY FORCES WORKING AGAINST US

TAKE HEED OF THE SIGNS, ELRIC--OR WE ARE DOOMED!

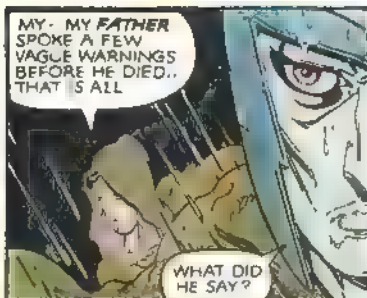
I AM TOO MUCH INTRIGUED TO STOP NOW

EITHER CONTINUE TO LEAD THE WAY OR TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW AND STAY HERE

YOU DESIRED TO SAMPLE THE BOOK'S WISDOM ONCE BUT NOW A FEW MINOR PITFALLS ON OUR JOURNEY HAVE FRIGHTENED YOU

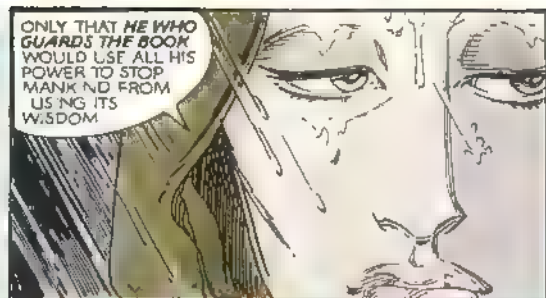
YOU HAVE NOT BEEN FRANK WITH ME, SHAARILLA

YOU KNOW SOMETHING OF THE FORCES SEEKING TO STOP US



MY - MY FATHER
SPOKE A FEW
VAGUE WARNINGS
BEFORE HE DIED..
THAT IS ALL

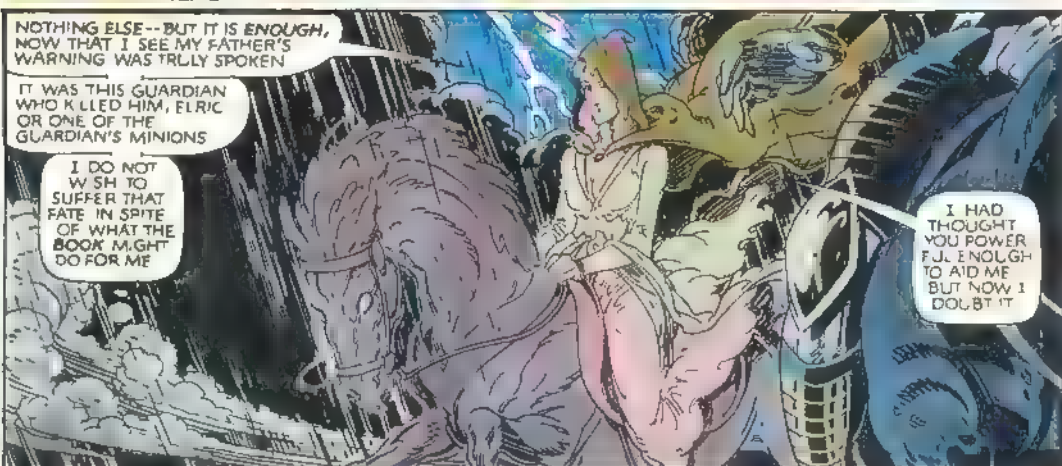
WHAT DID
HE SAY?



ONLY THAT HE WHO
GUARDS THE BOOK
WOULD USE ALL HIS
POWER TO STOP
MANK'ND FROM
US'NG ITS
WISDOM



WHAT
ELSE?



NOTHING ELSE--BUT IT IS ENOUGH,
NOW THAT I SEE MY FATHER'S
WARNING WAS TRLLY SPOKEN

IT WAS THIS GUARDIAN
WHO KILLED HIM, ELRIC
OR ONE OF THE
GUARDIAN'S MINIONS

I DO NOT
WISH TO
SUFFER THAT
FATE IN SPIE
OF WHAT THE
BOOK MIGHT
DO FOR ME

I HAD
THOUGHT
YOU POWER
FUL ENOUGH
TO AID ME
BUT NOW I
DOUBT IT



I HAVE PROTECTED
YOU SO FAR

NOW TELL
ME WHAT
YOU SEEK
FROM THE
BOOK



I AM TOO
ASHAMED



I SOUGHT
MY WINGS



YOUR WINGS? YOU
MEAN--A SPELL BY
WHICH YOU COULD
GROW WINGS?

FOR THIS YOU
SEEK THE
VESSEL OF
THE WORLD'S
MIGHTIEST
WISDOM?



IF YOU WERE
THOUGHT
DEFORMED
IN YOUR OWN
LAND IT
WOULD SEEM
IMPORTANT
ENOUGH
FOR YOU!



FORGIVE ME
SHAARILA



I, TOO,
HAVE FELT
AS YOU DO

NEXT DAY AMID
THE BLACK
MOUNTAINS,
SHAARILL A
LEADS HER
COMPANIONS
ALONG THE
ROCKY ROUTE
SHE HAS
MEMORIZED

TO A CAVE
ABOVE WHOSE
ENTRANCE
A CURIOUS
SYMBOL IS
ENGRAVED

THE
SIGN OF
CHAOS

I SHOULD
HAVE
GUESSED

FOR YOUR
EDIFICATION,
FR END
MOONGLUM

THAT MEANS WE ARE
STANDING IN TERRITORY
PRESIDED OVER BY THE
LORDS OF CHAOS, OR
ONE OF THEIR MINIONS

THAT MUST BE WHY
ARIOCH WAS SO
SLOW TO AID ME
BEFORE, HE TOO IS
A LORD OF CHAOS

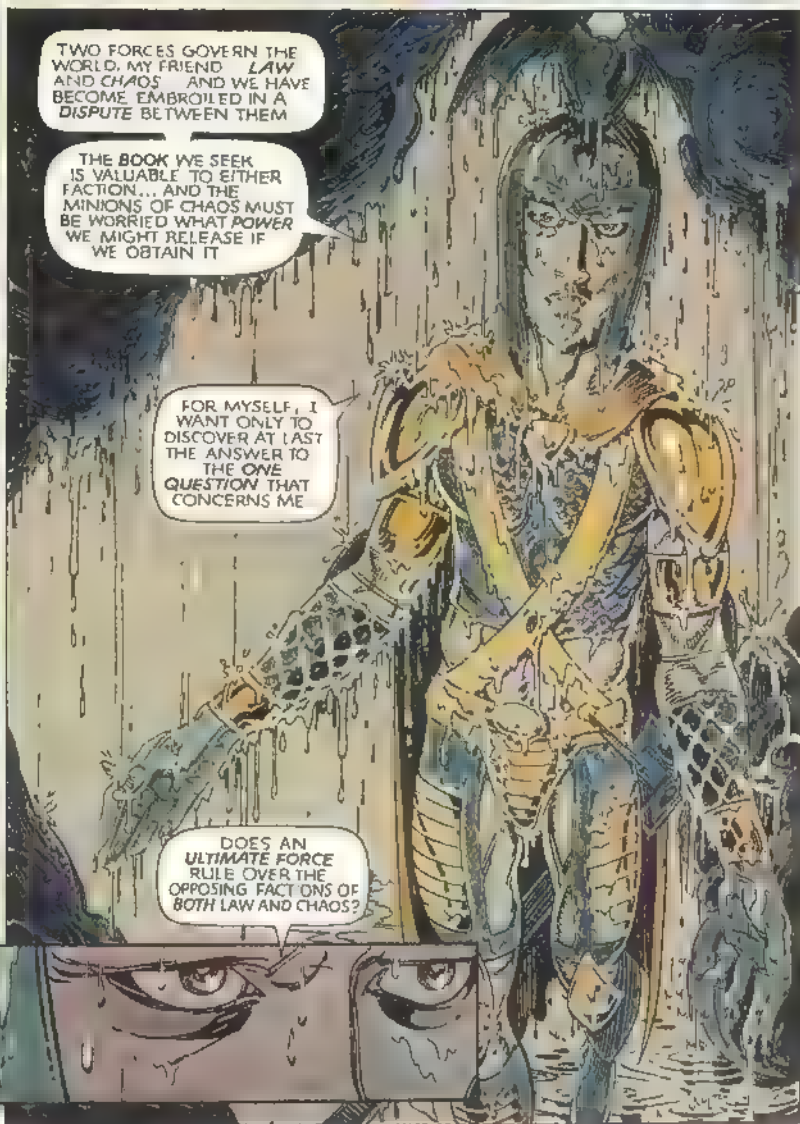
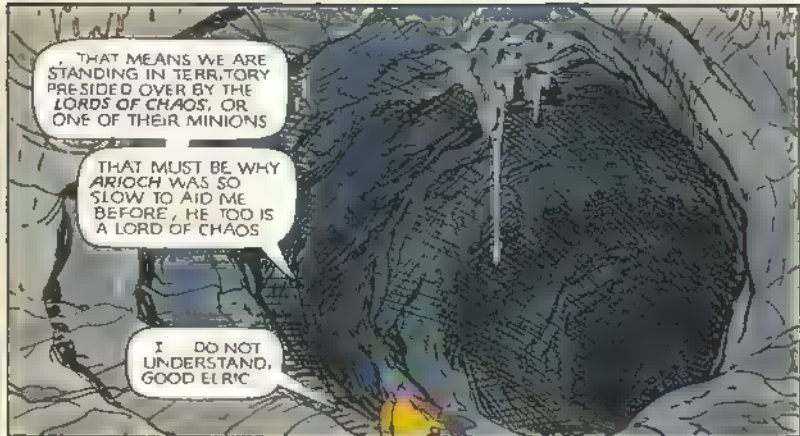
I DO NOT
UNDERSTAND,
GOOD ELRIC

TWO FORCES GOVERN THE
WORLD, MY FRIEND LAW
AND CHAOS AND WE HAVE
BECOME EMBROILED IN A
DISPUTE BETWEEN THEM

THE BOOK WE SEEK
IS VALUABLE TO EITHER
FACTION... AND THE
MINIONS OF CHAOS MUST
BE WORRIED WHAT POWER
WE MIGHT RELEASE IF
WE OBTAIN IT

FOR MYSELF, I
WANT ONLY TO
DISCOVER AT LAST
THE ANSWER TO
THE ONE
QUESTION THAT
CONCERNS ME

DOES AN
ULTIMATE FORCE
RULE OVER THE
OPPOSING FACT IONS OF
BOTH LAW AND CHAOS?





THIS IS NO TRUE
CAVE WHICH STRETCHES
BEFORE US BUT A
TUNNEL



ALL WE CAN DO
IS PRESS ON TILL
WE FIND ITS
END

LET'S
JUST HOPE
THAT
END LIES
NOT



DOWN
WARD



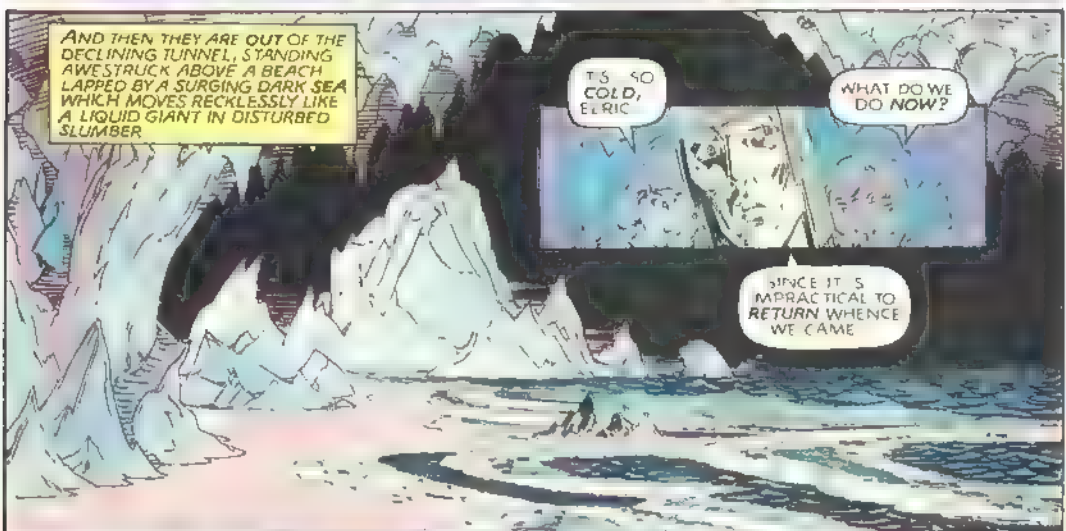
FOR HOURS THEY PRESS ON
WARD IN PITCH DARKNESS



THE FLOOR
BENEATH THEIR
FEET, THEIR
ONLY REALITY



WHEN
IT IS
REAL



AND THEN THEY ARE OUT OF THE
DECLINING TUNNEL, STANDING
AWESTRUCK ABOVE A BEACH
LAPPED BY A SURGING DARK SEA
WHICH MOVES RECKLESSLY LIKE
A LIQUID GIANT IN DISTURBED
SLUMBER

IT'S SO
COLD,
ELRIC

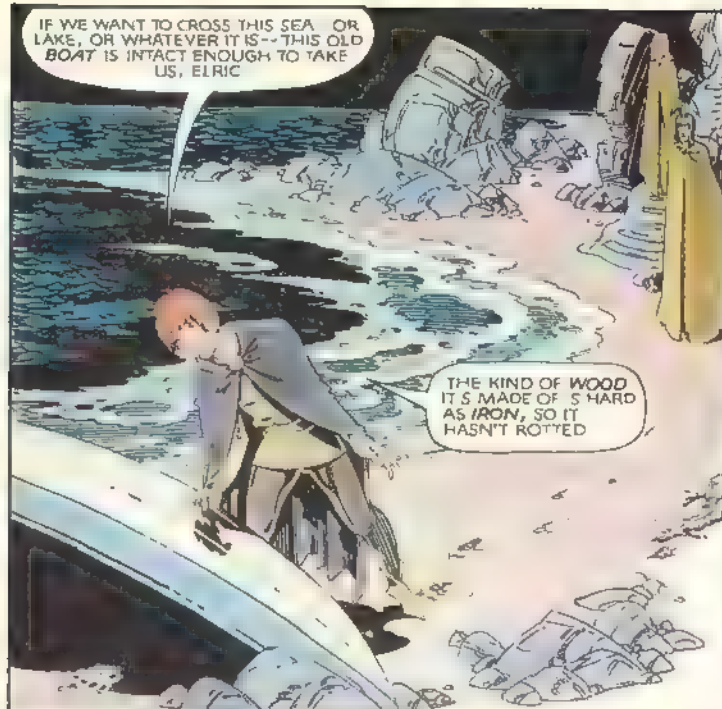
WHAT DO WE
DO NOW?

SINCE IT'S
IMPRACTICAL TO
RETURN WHENCE
WE CAME



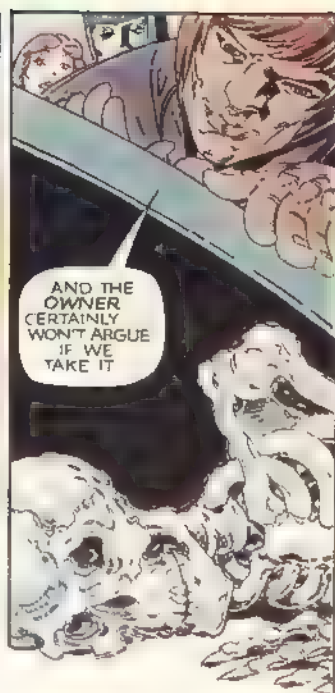
WE SHALL
VENTURE OVER
THE SEA

COME



IF WE WANT TO CROSS THIS SEA OR LAKE, OR WHATEVER IT IS-- THIS OLD BOAT IS INTACT ENOUGH TO TAKE US, ELLIC

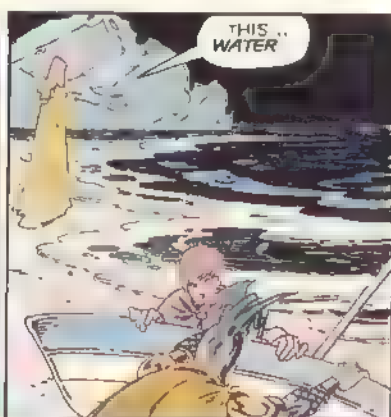
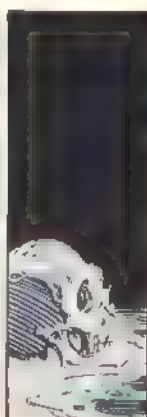
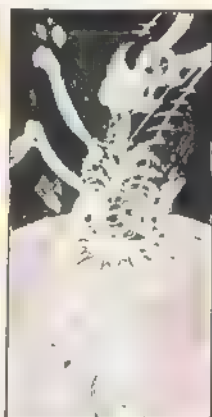
THE KIND OF WOOD IT'S MADE OF IS HARD AS IRON, SO IT HASN'T ROTTED



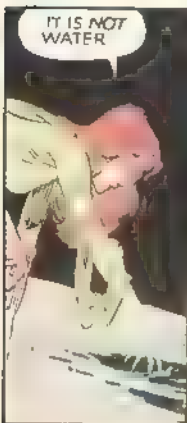
AND THE OWNER CERTAINLY WON'T ARGUE IF WE TAKE IT



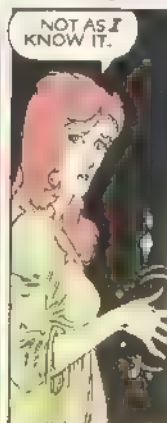
THEN LET US DO SO!



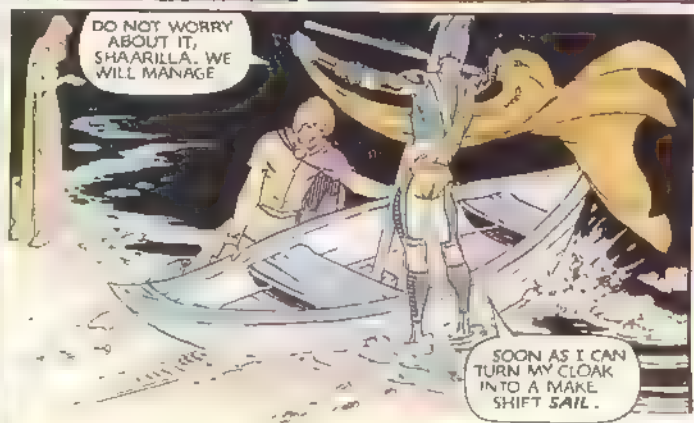
THIS WATER



IT IS NOT WATER



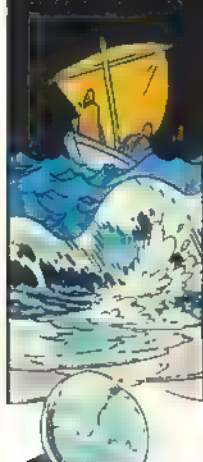
NOT AS I KNOW IT.



DO NOT WORRY ABOUT IT, SHAAIRILLA. WE WILL MANAGE

SOON AS I CAN TURN MY CLOAK INTO A MAKE SHIFT SAIL.

SOON THEY SHOVE
OFF, TAKING CARE
NOT TO GET THEIR
FEET IN THE SEA...



...AS PERHAPS
THE BOAT'S
MAKER DID.



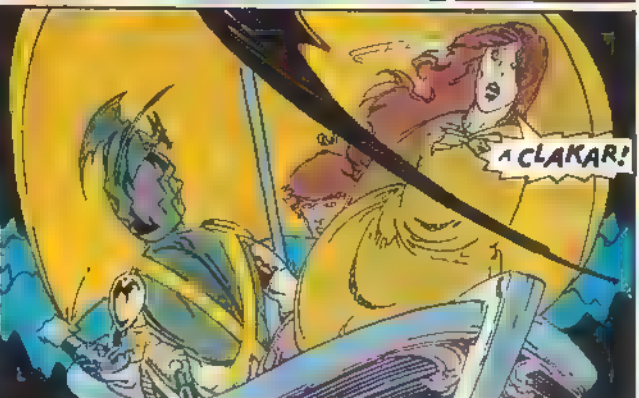
ELRIC



I THINK I HEAR
SOMETHING



ELRIC?

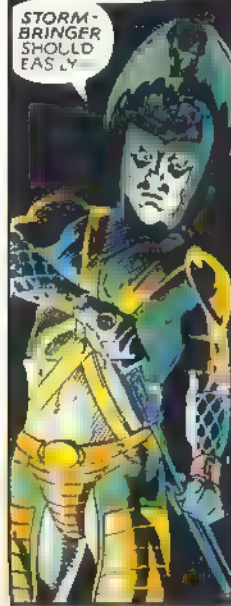


CLAKAR!

SWOOPED OVER US SO
FAST-- I COULDN'T
MAKE IT OUT!

WHAT IS A
CLAKAR,
ELRIC?
WHAT?

PRIMEVAL ANCESTORS
OF SHAAARIL LA'S
PEOPLE - BUT WHOEVER
SEEKS TO STOP OUR
QUEST HAD BEST FIND
SOME MORE ORIGINAL
MEANS



STORM-
BRINGER
SHOULD
EASILY

THE RUNE-
SWORD,
HOWEVER,
REMAINS
SILENT IN
HIS HAND.
ITS FAMILIAR
HOWL OF GLEE
MUTED.



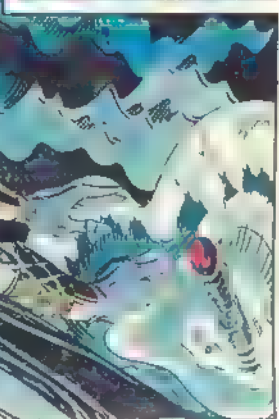
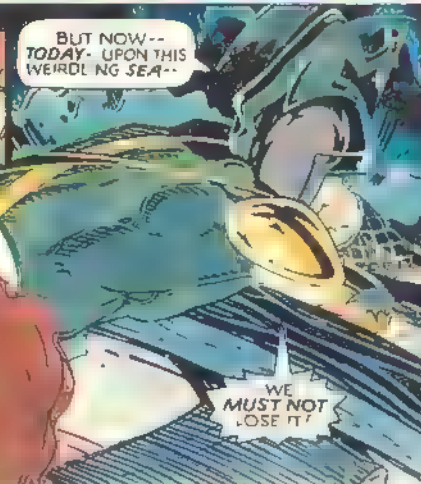
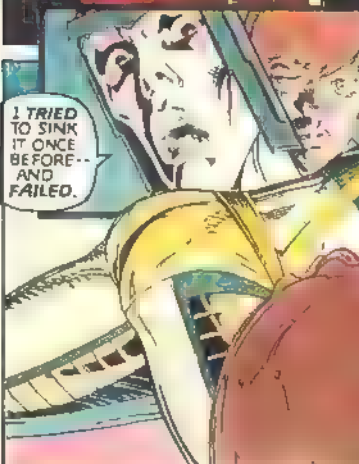
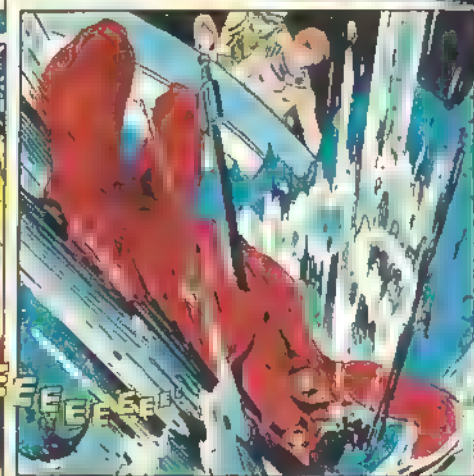
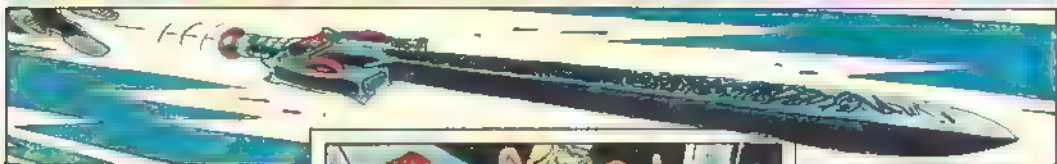
INSTEAD OF THE RUSH OF
POWER THAT USUALLY FLOWS
UP ELRIC'S ARM--

-HE FEELS
ONLY A
SLIGHT
TINGLING



AND THEN THE CLAKAR IS
UPON THEM AGAIN, WITH A
BEAT OF LEATHERY WINGS...





THERE! I HAVE IT!
BUT-- SO WEAK--!

AM I BOUND
TO THIS BLACK
BLADE--
FOREVER?

WE MUST CROSS
THIS SEA
SPEEDILY

OR WE ARE LOST

ELRIC! WE'RE
NEARING
LAND--I CAN
SEE IT!

BUT-- WE'RE
TRAVELING
TOWARD IT
SO FAST--!

TOO FAST

ELRIC-- CAN
YOU RISE?

I WON'T DIE
BUT ALREADY MY
EYESIGHT IS FADING

THE FORCES OF
CHAOS RULED
SO STRONGLY
ON THE SEA

GIVE ME
MY BLADE

I CAN ONLY HOPE
ITS POWER RETURNS
ON DRY LAND

AGAIN THE
RUNESWORD
MOANS FAINTLY

ITS SONG INCREASING AS THAT POWER FLOWS
UP ALONG ELRIC'S ARM, GIVING HIM
RENEWED VITALITY.

...BUT AT A PRICE...

IN TIME, THE ALBINO
RISES, TREMBLING...
SILENTLY LEAD HIS
COMRADES TOWARD A LIGHT
IN THE SUBTERRANEAN
DISTANCE...

MESSIAH

"HAS BEEN A
TERRIFIC
BATTLE. FOR
DAYS THE BLOOD
HAS FLOWED

THE WAR "SELF" HAS GONE ON YU FOR
YEARS ACROSS A DOZEN DIFFERENT
WORLDS. THE BODY COUNT HAS DROWNED
ANY HOPE FOR SELLY ON TO TH'S TONE, CT

BUT NOT EVEN A GREAT BATTLE
LIKE TH'S CAN GO ON FOREVER

ALL THINGS
MUST END

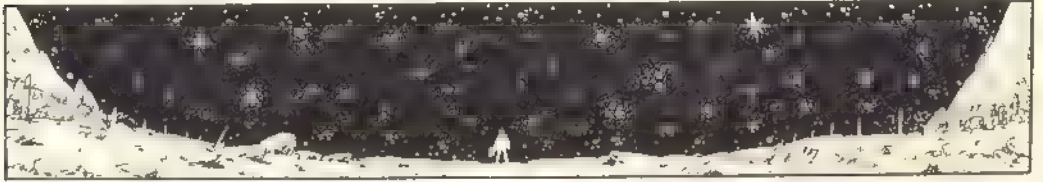
A TEMPORARY CEASE FIRE IS CALLED. BODIES ARE COLLECTED FOR BURIAL.



BACK IN THE TRENCHES, WEAPONS ARE CLEANED AND RECHARGED. NEW BATTLE PLANS ARE FORMULATED.



FOR THIS IS ONLY A TEMPORARY CEASE FIRE.

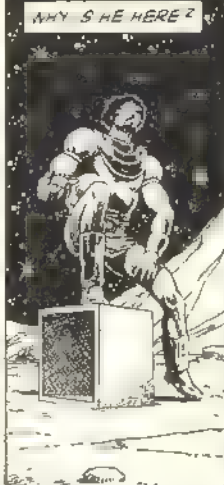


HE IS A
CIVILIAN

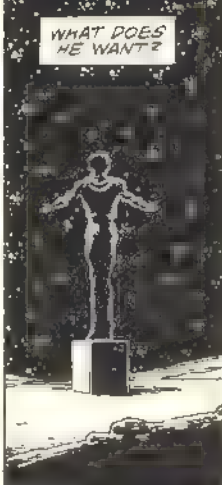


HE IS ALONE.

WHY IS HE HERE?



WHAT DOES
HE WANT?



MY CHILDREN!
HARKEN UNTO ME!



HEAR MY WORDS, FOR I AM
YOUR MESSIAH!



I HAVE COME TO SAVE YOU
FROM YOUR OWN MADNESS.

I HAVE COME TO
BRING YOU PEACE



LISTEN TO MY WORDS AND BEAR
WITNESS TO THE INSANITY OF
THIS THING CALLED WAR.



LOOK YOU ACROSS
THIS FIELD, WHAT
DO YOU SEE?



IS THAT NOT
YOUR BROTHER STARING
BACK AT YOU?



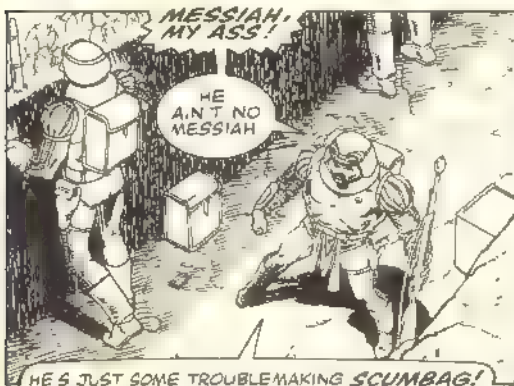
HIS WORDS FILL THE
BATTLEFIELD AND CUT
DEEP

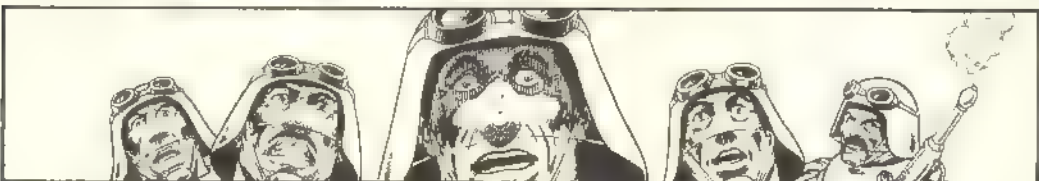


THEY CUT DEEP INTO LONG UNUSED EMOTIONS. THEY CUT DEEP INTO SOULS THICKLY ENCRUSTED WITH WAR. THEY CUT DEEP SO THAT SOMETHING WHICH HAS LONG BEEN BURIED CAN ONCE AGAIN SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY.



UNFORTUNATELY SOME MEN CAN HEAR
BUT ARE INCAPABLE OF LISTENING





**THE
BASTARDS!**

THEY
KILLED
THE
MESSIAH!



THE SAY OR HAD COME
TO BRING US PEACE
AND THEY KILLED HIM!



YEAH THE SCUMBAGS

THEY CAN'T
GET AWAY
WITH THAT



THEY MUST PAY!



THEY
MUST DIE!

ATTACK!

AND SO THE CEASE FIRE
DIES WITH THE MESSIAH



ALL THINGS MUST END

... BUT SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE.



SYNOPSIS

Two earthmen — marine biologist *John Isaac* and submarine commander *Falco* — have been shanghaied by aliens who hunt whales across the vast reaches of space.

To prepare the prisoners for duty aboard his strange, treelike vessel, *Captain Rotwang* turns them over to his ship's surgeons, enormous insects known as the *Xlexu*. The Xlexu strip Isaac of his skin, replacing it with a transparent membrane suited to the atmosphere within which he must now work. In addition, they join the two sides of his brain, which are separate in most humans, giving him the ability to generate and release an immensely powerful *aura*. Falco has been decapitated, his body set in perpetual, robotlike motion as a laborer, while his intellect and emotions remain trapped in his head.

In return for Rotwang's guarantee that he and Falco will be restored and returned to Earth, Isaac sends out his aura, drawing Rotwang's nemesis, the great red whale *Abraxas*, toward their ship. Then the captain betrays his promise, ordering his crewmen to kill the prisoners. One Xlexu escapes with Isaac, but the other is mortally wounded. Dying, it reveals to Rotwang that he and his crew have been Xlexu pawns, acting out some great design of the insects all along.



ABRAXAS AND THE EARTHMAN

written and illustrated
by
RICK VEITCH

BELLY OF THE BEAST

LEKAS! HE BURSTS THROUGH THE STORM CLOUDS, BLOTTING OUT THE SKY, CHURNING THE HEAVENS IN HIS VENGEFUL WAKE..

"THEN HE STOPS!"

SO, MONSTER, IT SEEMS THE STRINGS OF THE XLEKU HAVE JERKED US BOTH LIKE PUPPETS TO THIS MOMENT!

YE SENSE IT, TOO! THIS ENCOUNTER IS AS IMMUTABLY DECREED AS DAY MUST FOLLOW NIGHT!

THE CLOCK OF FATE BEGINS TO CHIME, WHALE-- BUT IT TOLLS YER FINAL HOUR!

IT IS YER EXECUTIONER YE NOW GAZE UPON!

TO THE BOATS, MEN!

BUT HIS SIZE...

DEAR AMMA, WE NEVER SIGNED ON FOR THIS!

ETCH '82



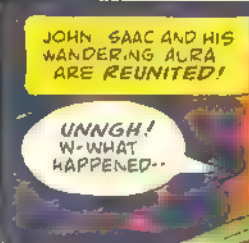
THE GREAT RED
BEGINS TO MOVE IN
EVER CONTRACTING
CIRCLES AROUND
THE VORRIKKE..

USE YER
HEADS--YER
ONLY HOPE IS
TO BRING HIM
DOWN...

...ELSE
HE'LL HAVE
US ALL FOR
HIS SUPPER!

HE'S
RIGHT!
WE'VE NO
CHOICE!

WHILE
BEYOND
THE NEXT
CLOUD
BANK



JOHN SAAC AND HIS
WANDERING ALRA
ARE REUNITED!

UNNGH!
W-WHAT
HAPPENED--



YOUR NEW SELF IS
ALIVE AND WORKING
FOR YOU,
EARTHMAN--

NOW
YOU HAVE
BUT TO
AWAKEN TO
THIS
MARVELOUS
FACT!



DO YOU
MEAN MY
AURA? I
DON'T SEEM
TO HAVE ANY
CONTROL
OVER IT...

THE
SELF CAN
NEVER BE
'CONTROLLED'.

YET TO
AWAKEN INTO
IT WILL SERVE
ALL CREATION
WELL.



I'M
CONFUSED,
XLEXU--
IS THIS
REAL OR
AM I
DREAMING?

EVERY
DREAM IS
REAL,
EARTHMAN...



...AND
ALL LIFE
IS A
DREAM--!

NODOO!

FROM THE LEAD WHALEBOAT, ROTWANG LETS LOOSE
BARB AFTER BARB INTO THE HIDE OF HIS NEMESIS...

FEEL THESE
NAILS, ABRAXAS!
FROM HELL'S
HEART I STAB
AT THEE!

FOR HATE'S SAKE
I SPIT MY FINAL
BREATH AT THEE!

BUT HIS FEARSOME RAGE
IS DWARFED BY THAT
OF THE GREAT RED!

IN A BLOOD FRENZY,
ABRAXAS BEGINS TO
DISMAST THE
YORRIKKE, LIMB
BY LIMB...

MOVE
HIM
AWAY
FROM
THE
SHIP,
YE
MAGGOTS!

THE GRAVITY
FURNACE CAN'T
TAKE SUCH
ABUSE!

THEY'RE
TRYING,
CAPTAIN!

IRONICALLY
THE ONLY
ONE LEFT
ABOARD THE
YORRIKKE
WHO IS
UNWARE
OF THE
DANGER
IS THE
TENDER
OF THE
GRAVITY
FURNACE.

THAT
WOULD
BE THE
HEADLESS
BODY OF
COMMANDER
FALCO...

MECHANICALLY
FEEDING THE
FURNACE AS
IT HAS FOR
MONTHS...





UNABLE TO EVEN
SENSE WHEN ITS
SURROUNDINGS ARE
TRANSFORMED INTO
AN EXPLODING
HELL...



BLISSFULLY
UNCONSCIOUS
OF ITS OWN
DEATH!



TOPSIDE

THE FURNACE
HAS BLOWN!

FIRE IN
THE MAIN
HOLDS!

M-MY
BODY IS
DOWN
THERE--

--MY
BODY...?

THE BELLING OF
THE WHALE MIXES
WITH THE SCREAMS
OF DYING MEN...



THE
MONSTER IS
TOO BIG,
CAPTAIN! OUR
BARBS HAVE
NO EFFECT!

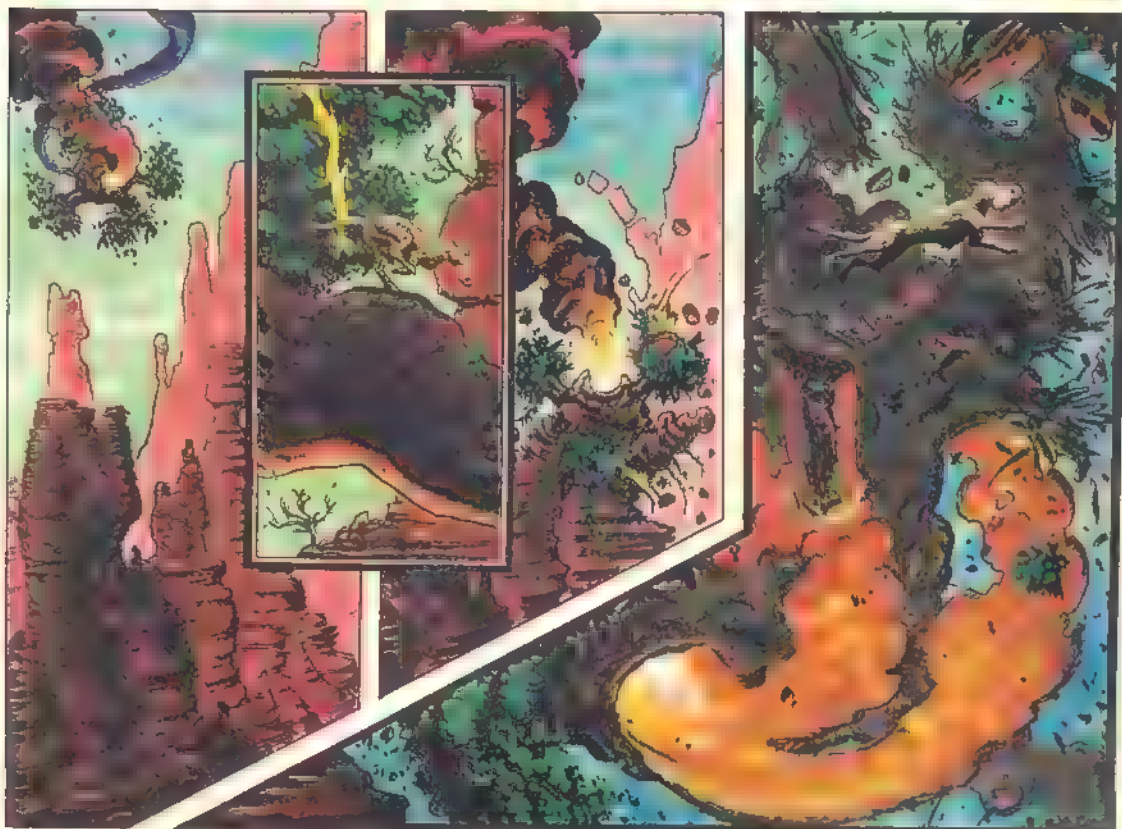
THE SHIP
IS BURNING!
THE BOILERS
HAVE LET GO!



NO! TO HAVE COME SO
FAR! TO HAVE RISKED
SO MUCH! ONLY TO
SEE HIM BURN YET
ANOTHER FINE SHIP
OUT FROM UNDER
ME...?

WHAT
BREAKS IN
ME NOW?
WHAT
SINOW
CRACKS?

AS ROTWANG'S EMOTIONS WRITHE LIKE A SACK FULL OF SNAKES, DESPAIR STALKS THE BURNING DECKS OF THE YORR KKE.



THE SHIP--
GREAT AMMA,
HE'S SUNK
THE SHIP!

CAPTAIN--
WE'RE THE
ONLY BOAT
LEFT!

C-CAPTAIN??

HO!

SOMETHING'S
ALIVE DOWN
THERE!

IT'S
SPHINK!

FOR
GOD'S
SAKE,
HURRY!

WITHDRAWING FROM HIS
PREY THE GREAT RED
PUSHES HIS PLEATED
FOREHEAD THROUGH
THE SKY, TRUMPETING
HIS VICTORY...

BAREEM

...LITTLE
REALIZING
HE CARRIES
WITHIN
HIM AN
UNWILLING
AND
SUFFERING
AUDIENCE...

AAARG!
HIS SONG--
SO POWERFUL
IT FEELS LIKE
MY HEAD'S GOING
TO EXPLODE!

MY SANITY
WON'T STAND UP
TO THIS FOR
VERY LONG!

HE SEEMS TO
BE LETTING UP,
THANK GOD..

NOW IF
ONLY I
COULD SEE
SOMETHING--



ISAAC TURNS INWARD, SEARCHING
THE SUBTLE REGIONS OF HIS
CONSCIOUSNESS..



...THERE HE
FINDS WHAT
HE NEEDS!

THAT'S THE
TICKET!
MAYBE I'M
GETTING THE
FEEL OF THIS
AURA THING...!

BUT IT DOESN'T
TELL ME WHAT
I'M DOING
IN HERE..?

THE
XIEKU WAS
SPEAKING
IN RIDDLES
LIKE
USUAL...



SOMETHING
ABOUT FINDING
MY SELF...

ACID!

!PHEW!
THIS MUST
BE ONE OF HIS
STOMACHS!

HE'S GOT
HALF THE
WHALING
INDUSTRY
DIGESTING
IN HIS
GASTRIC
JUICES!

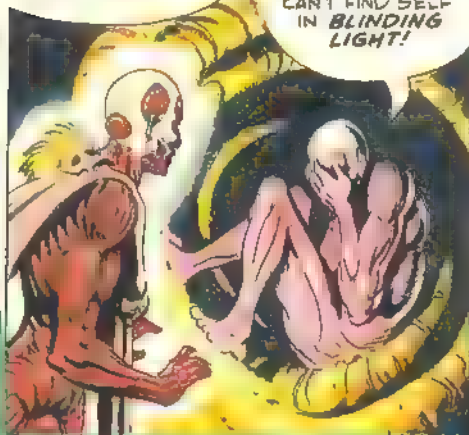
BUT IT'S
MORE THAN
JUST WHALERS--
I CAN MAKE OUT
SOME HI-TECH
ROCKETS
DOWN THERE,
TOO... HUH?



NO
LIGHT!
NO! TAKE
IT AWAY!

LIGHT HURTS LOON!
LOON DOES NOT
LIKE LIGHT!

INSECTS PUT LOON
IN HERE TO FIND
SELF, BUT LOON
CAN'T FIND SELF
IN BLINDING
LIGHT!



U-UNLESS
MAYBE YOU
ARE LOON'S
SELF?!

HE'S
SPEAKING
ENGLISH!

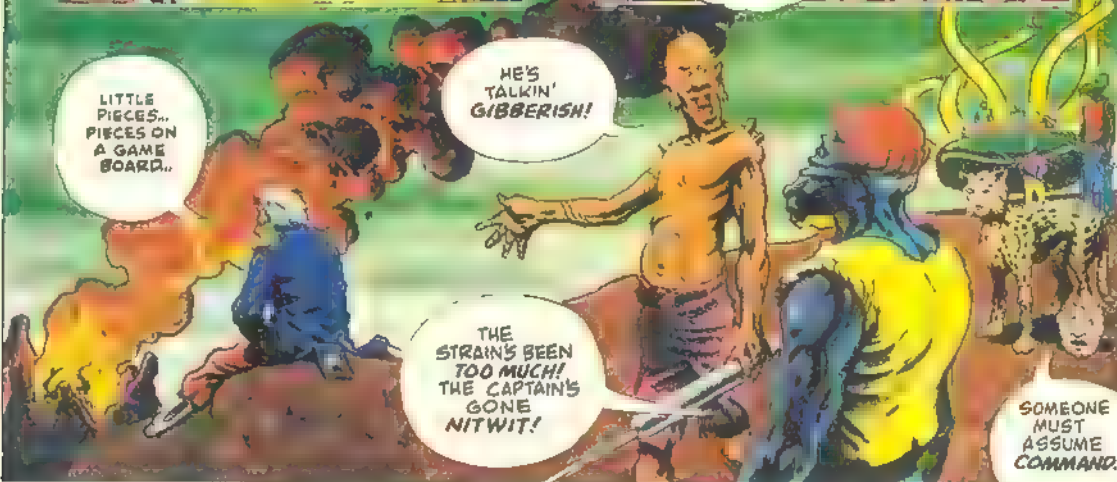


LITTLE
PIECES...
PIECES ON
A GAME
BOARD...

HE'S
TALKIN'
GIBBERISH!

THE
STRAIN'S BEEN
TOO MUCH!
THE CAPTAIN'S
GONE
NITWIT!

SOMEONE
MUST
ASSUME
COMMAND.



I'M FIRST MATE--
THAT PUTS ME
IN CHARGE!

WE'VE GOT TO SET OFF
IN THE REMAINING BOAT
AND HOPE TO FIND
ANOTHER WHALER--
PERHAPS THE KLEXU
ON BOARD CAN HELP
THE CAPTAIN...

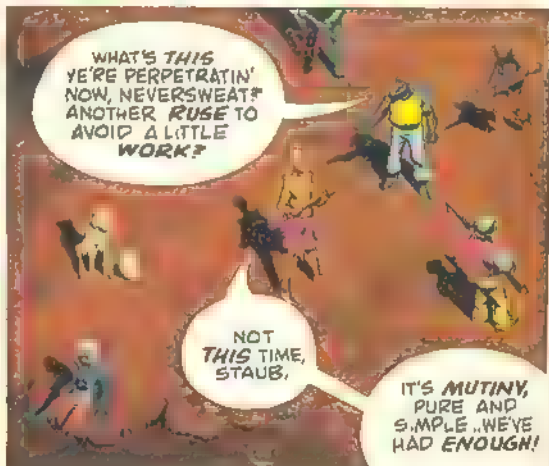
HOLD,
STAUB!

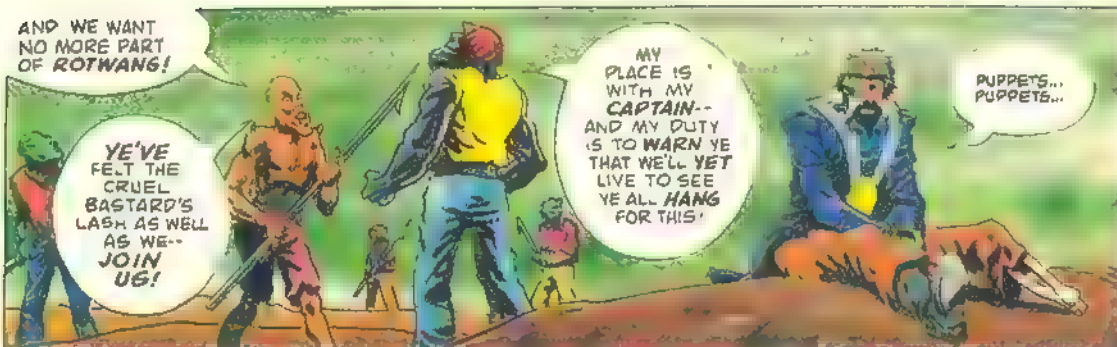


WHAT'S THIS
YE'RE PERPETRATIN'
NOW, NEVERSWEAT?
ANOTHER RUSE TO
AVOID A LITTLE
WORK?

NOT
THIS TIME,
STAUB,

IT'S MUTINY,
PURE AND
SIMPLE. WE'VE
HAD ENOUGH!



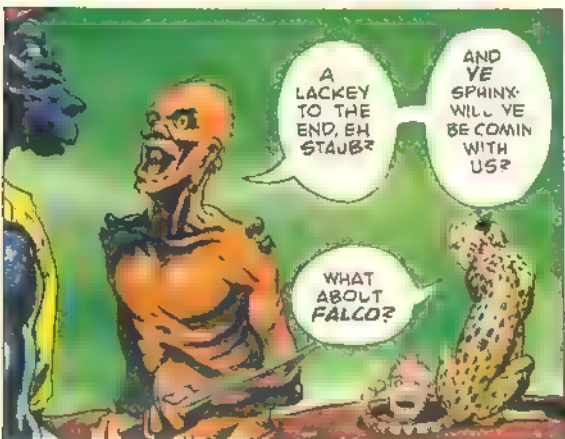


AND WE WANT
NO MORE PART
OF ROTWANG!

YE'VE
FELT THE
CRUEL
BASTARD'S
LASH AS WELL
AS WE--
JOIN
US!

MY
PLACE IS
WITH MY
CAPTAIN--
AND MY DUTY
IS TO WARN YE
THAT WE'LL YET
LIVE TO SEE
YE ALL HANG
FOR THIS!

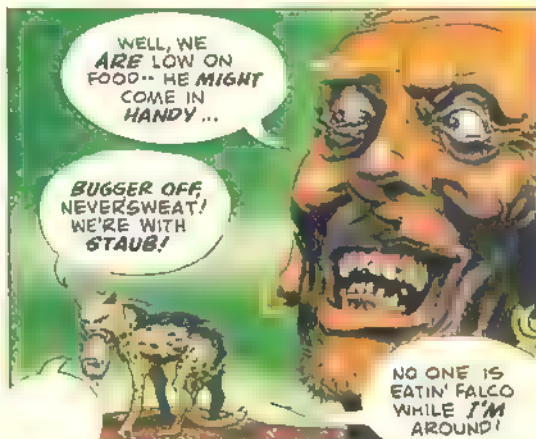
PUPPETS...
PUPPETS...



A
LACKEY
TO THE
END, EH
STAUB?

AND
YE
SPHYNX
WILL YE
BE COMIN
WITH US?

WHAT
ABOUT
FALCO?



WELL, WE
ARE LOW ON
FOOD-- HE MIGHT
COME IN
HANDY ...

BUGGER OFF,
NEVERSWEAT!
WE'RE WITH
STAUB!

NO ONE IS
EATIN' FALCO
WHILE I'M
AROUND!

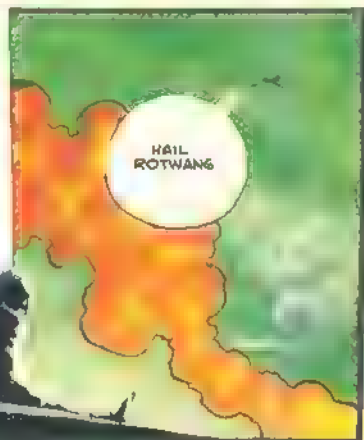


SO
BE
IT!

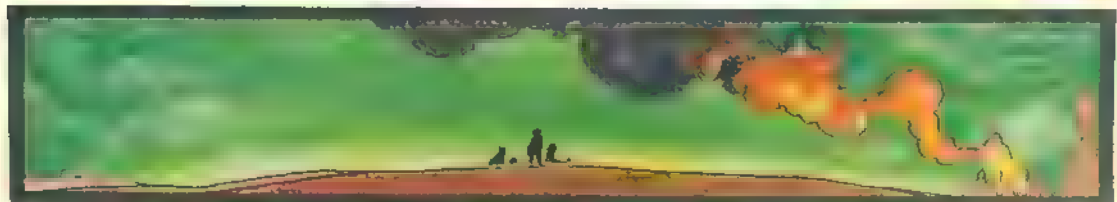
THROW
YERSELF
IN WITH THE
GIMP AND HIS
FOOL! WE CARE
NOT!



YER BLEACHED BONES
WILL JOIN THE REST--
IN THIS MONUMENT
TO ROTWANG'S QUEST!



HAIL
ROTWANG



ABRAXAS & THE EARTHMAN continues next issue

CHAPTER 4

"I THINK OUR QUEST
WILL END IN YONDER
CASTLE OF BLACK
STONE, MY FRIENDS.
THERE, OR NOWHERE."

"BEFORE I GO
FURTHER, ELRIC, I
THINK I'VE EARNED
THE RIGHT TO KNOW
WHAT THIS BOOK
IS YOU SEEK."

"IT IS CALLED THE
DEAD GODS' BOOK;
I CAN TELL YOU
NO MORE, MOONGLUM"

"I MIGHT NOT HAVE
ASKED, FOR ALL
YOUR WORDS MEAN
TO ME... BUT I HOPE
I'LL BE ALLOWED
SOME SMALL SHARE
OF WHATEVER
TREASURE
IT REPRESENTS"

WE NEED TO ENTER
THE CASTLE, BEFORE
WE CAN DIVIDE
ITS PRIZE

BUT ENTER
IT HOW?
THIS BARRED
GATE--!

SEE YOU?
IT FADES,
AS IF IT
HEARD YOUR
WORDS

I LIKE
NOT
THAT.

IT SMACKS
OF A TRAP
WAITING TO
BE SPRUNG

FORGET THE
BOOK, ELRIC!
WE CANNOT DO
BATTLE WITH
THE MINIONS
OF CHAOS!

SHAARILLA IS
RIGHT! BETTER
WE TRY TO
REACH THE
SURFACE.

YOU
DO
SO IF
YOU
LIKE

I WANT
THAT
BOOK!

AND HIS
COMPANIONS
DO NOT WANT TO
BE LEFT ALONE
IN THIS HELLISH
PLACE

WITHIN A TALL FIGURE
WREATHED IN SCARLET
FIRE AWAITS THEM,
GUSTY LAUGHTER
ROARING FROM
HIS MOUTH

GREETINGS TO YOU, LORD
ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ!

I AM ORUNLU THE
KEEPER, AND THIS IS
A STRONGHOLD OF
THE LORDS OF
CHAOS

YOU CANNOT
STOP US?

YOU NEED NOT FINGER
YOUR PUNY BLADE SO
NERVOUSLY... FOR I
CANNOT HARM YOU,
NOW THAT MY OBLIQUE
EFFORTS HAVE FAILED

I GAINED
POWER TO
REMAIN IN
YOUR REALM
ONLY BY
VOWING NOT
TO DO SO

TELL ME-- THE
BOOK YOU SEEK
IS IMPORTANT TO
MY MASTERS
FOR REASONS
I HAVE NEVER
SOUGHT TO
LEARN IN THREE
HUNDRED
CENTURIES OF
GUARDING IT...

BUT WHAT
CAN IT
MEAN TO
SUCH AS
YOU?

I SEEK IN IT
THE TRUTH

THERE IS
NO TRUTH
BUT THAT OF
ETERNAL
STRUGGLE

THERE
MUST BE!

WHO
RULES
ABOVE
THE
FORCES
OF LAW
AND
CHAOS?

I DO NOT
KNOW

THERE IS
ONLY THE
BALANCE

THEN PERHAPS
THE BOOK WILL
TELL ME.

WILL YOU
LET ME
PASS?

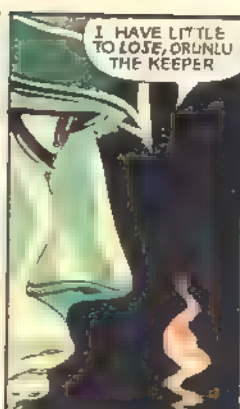
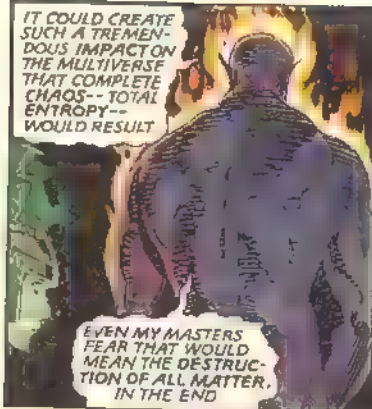
I HAVE SWORN
NEVER TO
VENTURE TO
THE SMALL
CHAMBER IN
THE CENTRAL
TOWER WHERE
IT LIES... ELSE
I MIGHT
EVEN LEAD
THE WAY

GO IF
YOU LIKE--
MY DUTY'S
OVER

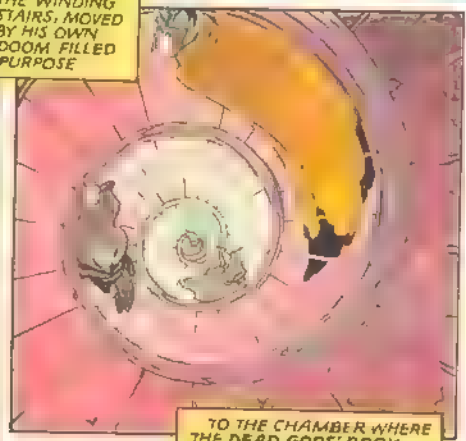
I HAVE BEEN TOLD THE KNOW-
LEDGE CONTAINED IN THE BOOK
COULD SWING THE BALANCE TO
THE SIDE OF THE FORCES OF LAW

BUT THERE IS
ANOTHER
POSSIBILITY
WHICH DISTURBS
ME EVEN MORE

WHAT IS
THAT?



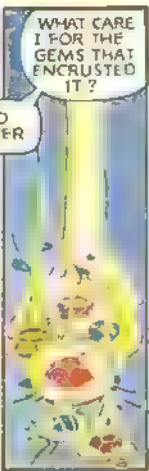
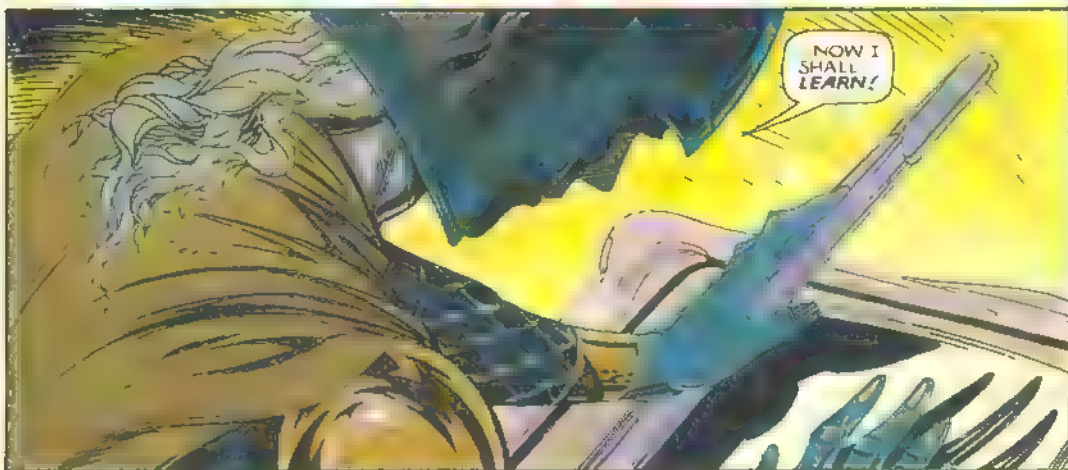
A MAD GLOW IN HIS CRIMSON EYES, ELRIC SWARMS AHEAD OF THE OTHER TWO UP THE WINDING STAIRS, MOVED BY HIS OWN DOOM-FILLED PURPOSE



TO THE CHAMBER WHERE THE DEAD GODS' BOOK THROBS WITH LIGHT AND BRILLIANT COLOR.

AT LAST-

THE TRUTH!



NNOOOOOOOO

IN ELRIC'S PALE AND TWITCHING HANDS, THERE IS NAUGHT BUT A PILE OF YELLOWISH DUST.

TIME HAS DESTROYED THE BOOK, WHICH HAS LAIN HERE UNTouched, POSSIBLY FORGOTTEN, FOR THREE HUNDRED CENTURIES.

EVEN THE WISE AND POWERFUL GODS WHO CREATED IT HAVE PERISHED, LONG SINCE.

...ITS KNOWLEDGE HAS FOLLOWED THEM

AND NOW

INTO OBLIVION

ELRIC

CAN WE GO NOW?

EPILOGUE:

ELRIC, HIS HEAD LOWERED BENEATH A WEIGHT OF WEARINESS AND DARK DESPAIR, DOES NOT SPEAK WHILE HIS COMPANIONS DRAG HIM FROM THE CHAMBER, ACROSS THE SUNKEN SEA, AND OUT ONCE MORE INTO THE WORLD OF THE SUN. THEN

NOW I WILL LIVE MY LIFE WITHOUT EVER KNOWING WHY I LIVE IT - WHETHER IT HAS PURPOSE OR NOT

EVEN IF THE BOOK COULD HAVE TOLD ME - WOULD I, THE ETERNAL SKEPTIC, HAVE BELIEVED?

I ENVY THOSE WHO KNOW-- WHO ARE CERTAIN OF THINGS

ALL I CAN DO NOW IS CONTINUE MY QUEST, AND HOPE - WITHOUT HOPE - THAT BEFORE MY SPAN IS ENDED, THE TRUTH WILL BE PRESENTED TO ME

ELRIC, IF I MAY COMFORT YOU SOMEHOW...

WOULD THAT WE HAD NEVER MET, SHAARILLA OF THE DANCING MIST!

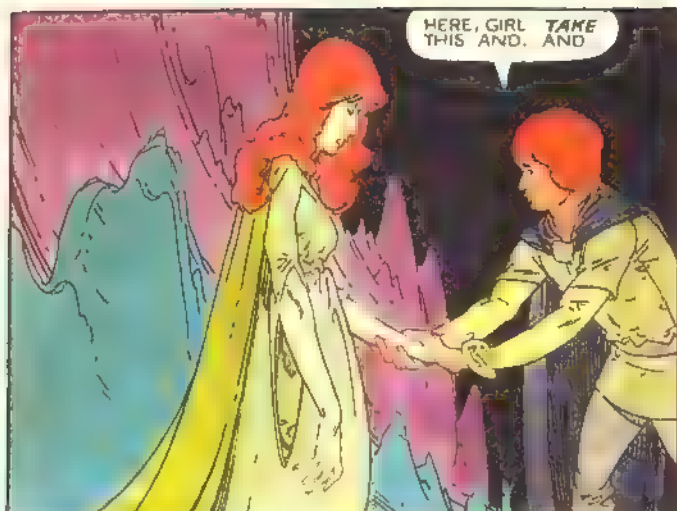
BECAUSE OF YOU, I AM LEFT MORE HOPE-LESS THAN BEFORE.

I FEEL THERE IS NO SALVATION IN THIS WORLD, BUT ONLY MALEVOLENT DOOM.

GOODBYE

SHAARILLA,
I

ELRIC.



HERE, GIRL TAKE THIS AND...



...GOOD LUCK TO YOU!



FRIEND MOONGEUM WHY DO YOU ?

I'VE FOLLOWED YOU THIS FAR, MASTER ELRIC, AND I SEE NO REASON TO STOP

BESIDES, UNLIKE YOURSELF, I'M A MATERIAL ST



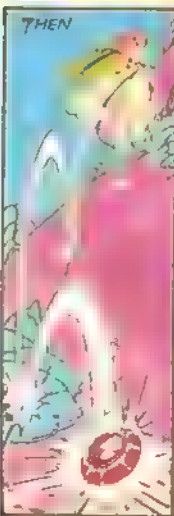
AND WE'LL NEED TO EAT, YOU KNOW



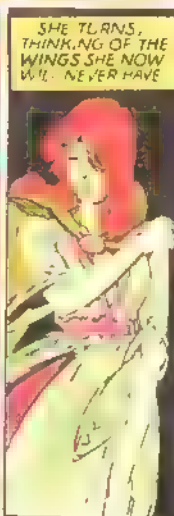
COME, ELRIC! WHAT NEW AND FRIENDLIER LANDS MAY WE VISIT

WHERE I MAY CHANGE THESE BAUBLES I SCOOPED UP INSIDE INTO WINE AND PLEASANT COMPANY?

BEHIND SHARILLA STARES MISERABLY AFTER THEM UNTIL THEY ARE QUITE GONE FROM SIGHT



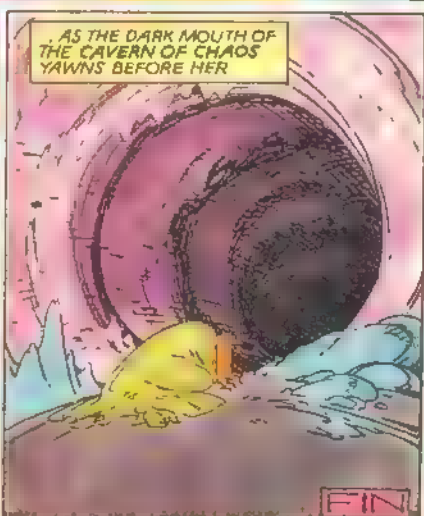
THEN



SHE THINKS, THINKING OF THE WINGS SHE NOW WILL NEVER HAVE



AND WAVES ALL THOUGHT OF THEM AWAY WITH A FLUTTERING HAND



AS THE DARK MOUTH OF THE CAVERN OF CHAOS YAWNS BEFORE HER

FIN



Hmmm YES, I SUPPOSE MONETARY
COMPENSATION WOULD HAVE A
DUBIOUS VALUE TO A SIMPLE
PHOTOSYNTHETIC CREATURE, BUT YOU
MUST CONSIDER THE HONOR OF HAVING
YOUR OWN CHAPTER IN THE EXTRA-
TERRESTRIAL BIOLOGY BOOKS!

I CAN'T
READ

NOW LOOK HERE ...
ABOVE ALL YOU HAVE
A RESPONSIBILITY TO
THE SCIENTIFIC
COMMUNITY! YOU ARE
UNIQUE! WON'T YOU
RECONSIDER?



I WANT TO
STAY HERE

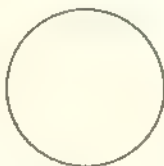
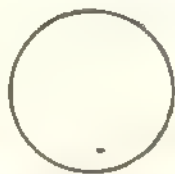
WELL, I MUST RESPECT
YOUR WISHES, OF COURSE,
BUT WON'T YOU LET ME
TAKE A FEW PHOTOGRAPHS
BEFORE I LEAVE? YOU SEE,
YOU ARE THE **BIGGEST**
UNICELLULAR AMOEBOID
ORGANISM I HAVE
EVER SEEN!



SO THEN
DID YOU TELL
HIM YOU FELT
MITOSIS
COMING ON?

NAW.. I THINK
HE WAS ONLY
INTERESTED IN
ONE CELLED
ORGANISMS

THE BEGINNING.

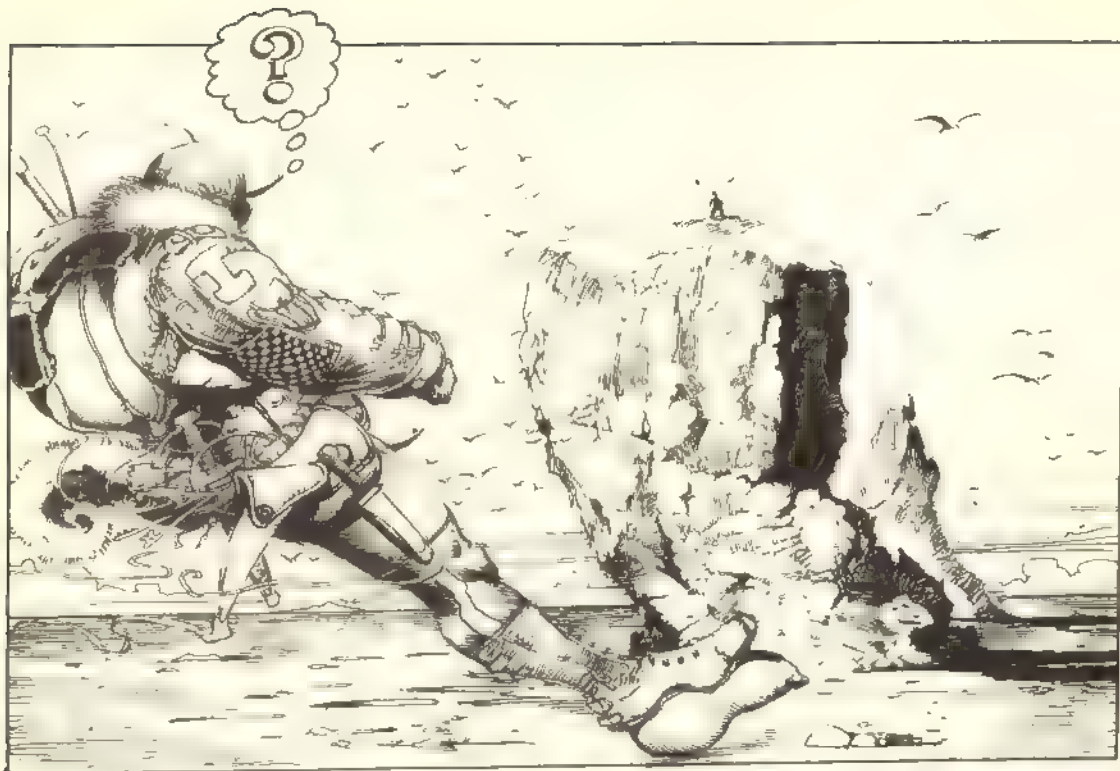




Suydam 81

THE END

by Arthur Suydam
AN ADVENTURE OF CHOLLY AN' FLYTRAP
(ACTUALLY FLYTRAP IS STILL RECOVERIN' FROM LAST
ISSUE'S HEAVY ACTION, BUT HE LIKES SEEIN'
HIS NAME 'IN PRINT.)





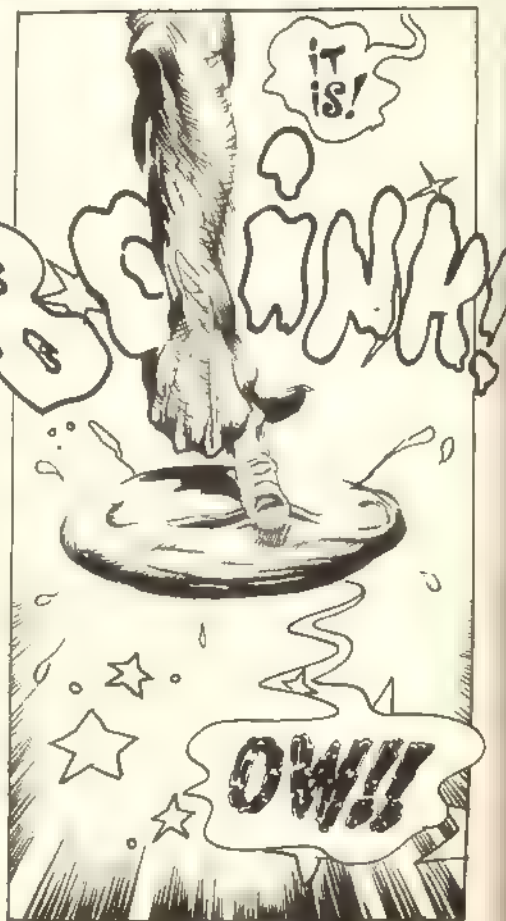
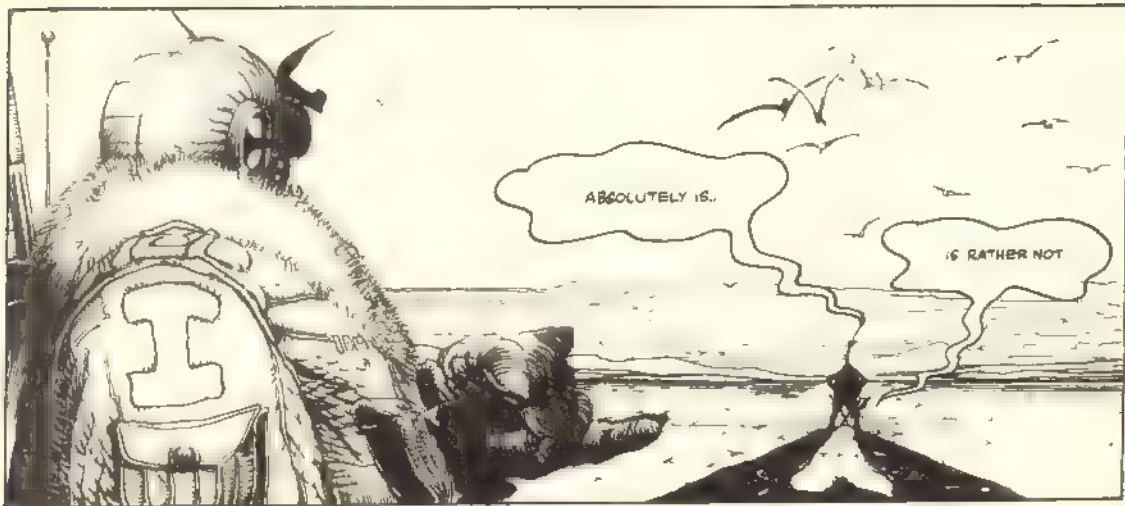
IT IS NOT!



MY DEAR LAD, IT QUITE
CERTAINLY AND MOST
UNQUESTIONABLY

IS!

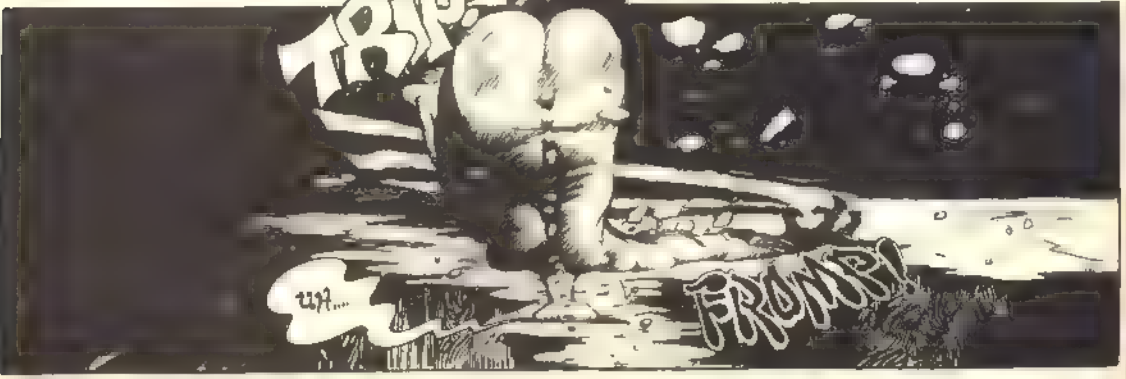
OH, NO,
MY BOY!
T PROBABLY
AND QUITE
NEGATIVELY
ISN'T!

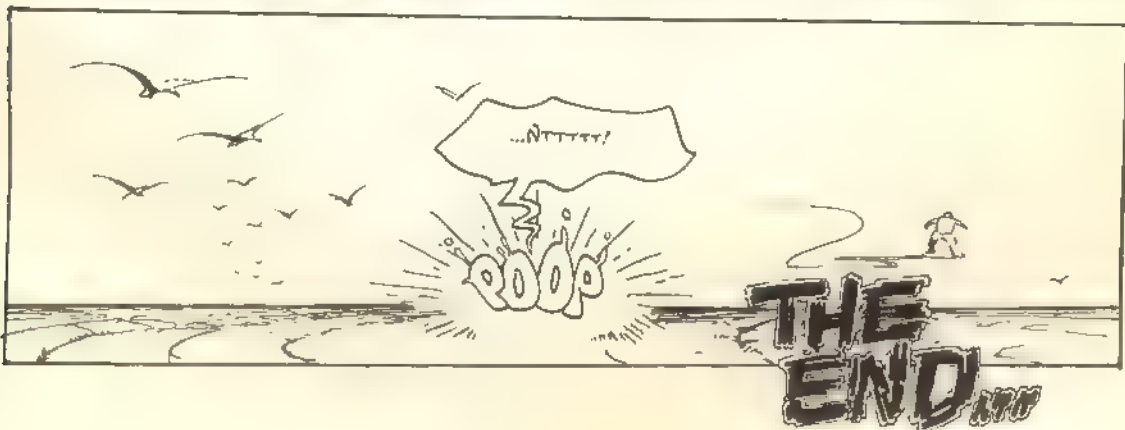
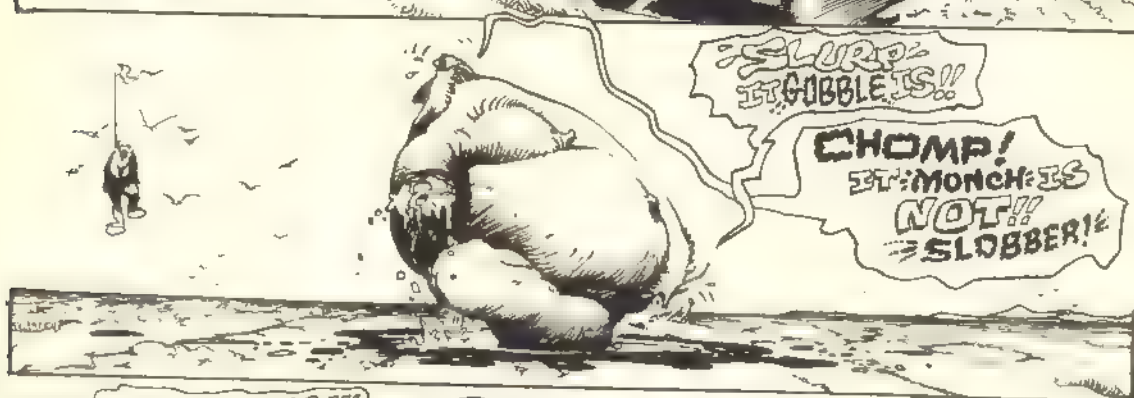




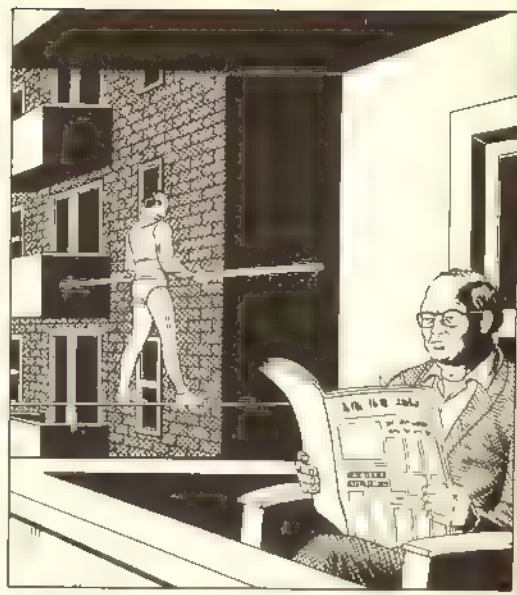
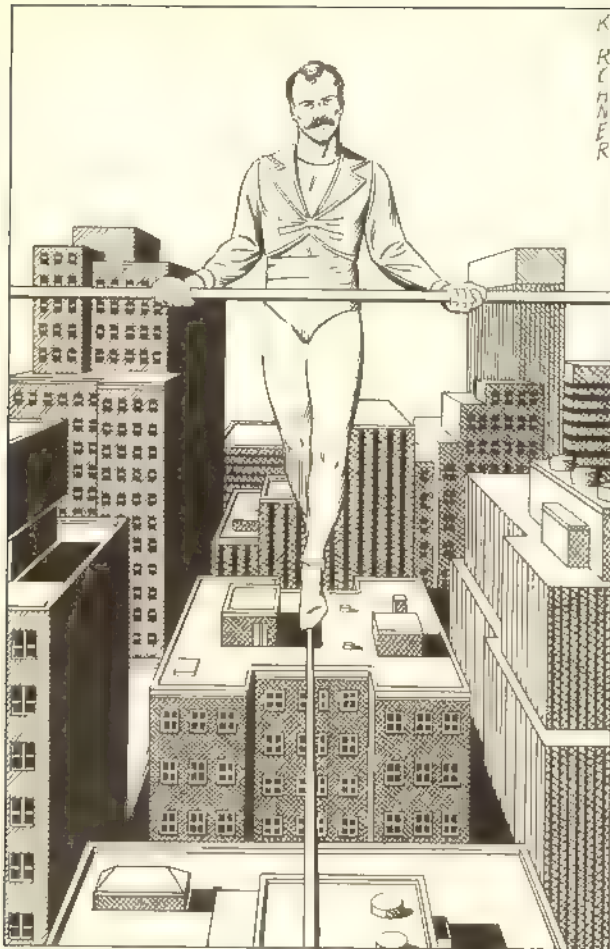
SWORDS!

SWORDS
IT IS!!

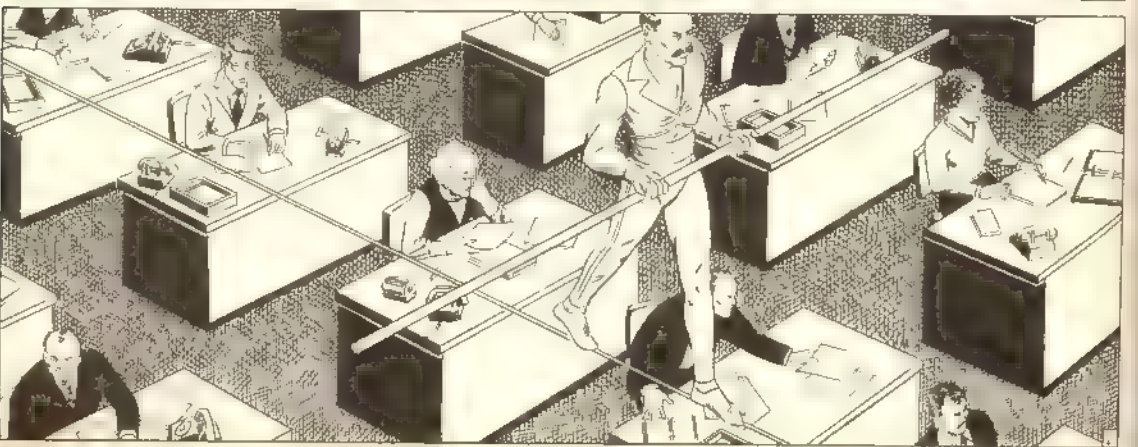




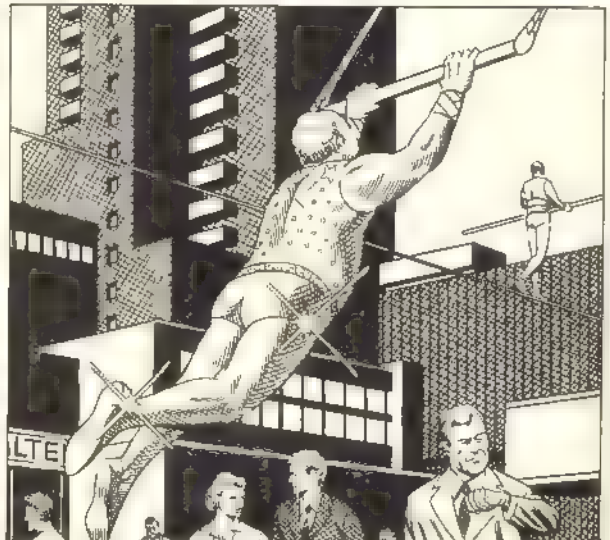
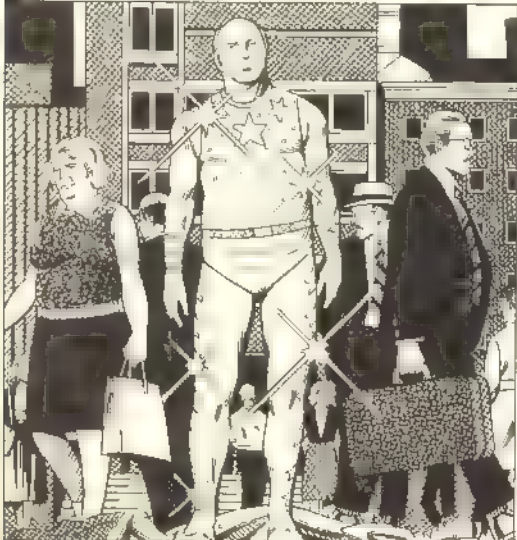
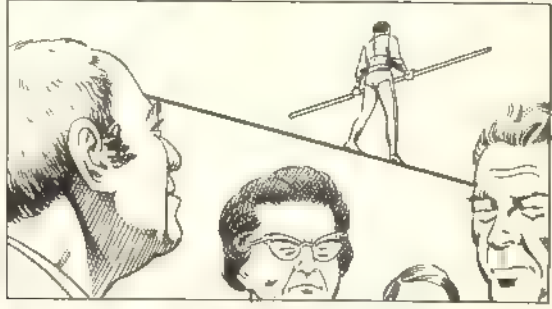
K
R
C
H
N
E
R



HIGHWIRE







PIT STOP

WELL, I COULD LEAP FASTER--IF I WEREN'T EXHAUSTED TO THE BONE! YOU HAD TO INSULT THE CAPTAIN'S BACKFLIP AND GET US THIS GODFORSAKEN ROUTE. TWO DAYS OFF COURSE WITH THIS SANDSTORM..

OH, SHUT UP

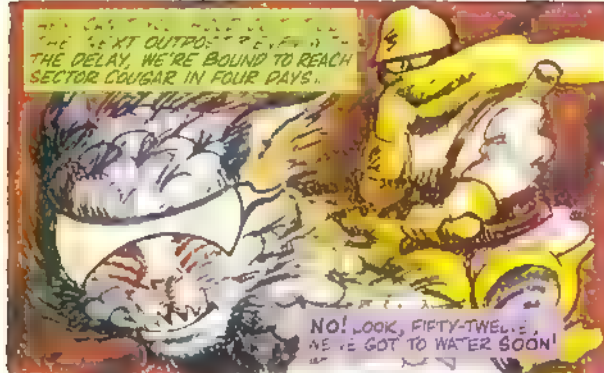
©1980 LEE MARRS



DON'T GET SHORT WTH ME, HOTSHOT TORQUE RDER. I'LL BACK YOUR GRUMPY CARCASS RIGHT INTO THE NEAREST DOME RUIN. AND GET READY FOR A LITTLE WORK--I'M THIRSTY!

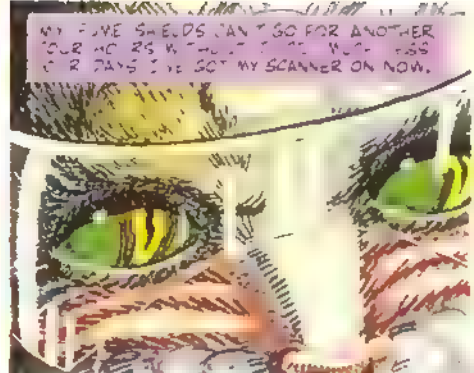
OH, NO!!

A STAR & REACH PRODUCTION



THE NEXT OUTPOST.
THE DELAY, WE'RE BOUND TO REACH
SECTOR COUGAR IN FOUR DAYS.

NO! LOOK, FIFTY-TWELVE,
WE'VE GOT TO WATER SOON!



MY FIVE SHEEDS CAN'T GO FOR ANOTHER
FOUR HOURS WITHOUT GETTING A
FOUR DAYS I'VE GOT MY SCANNER ON NOW.



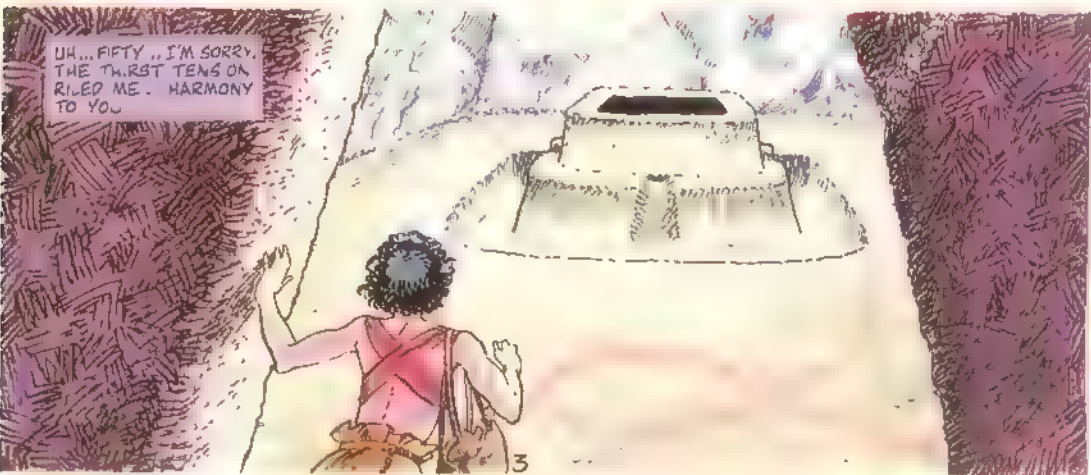
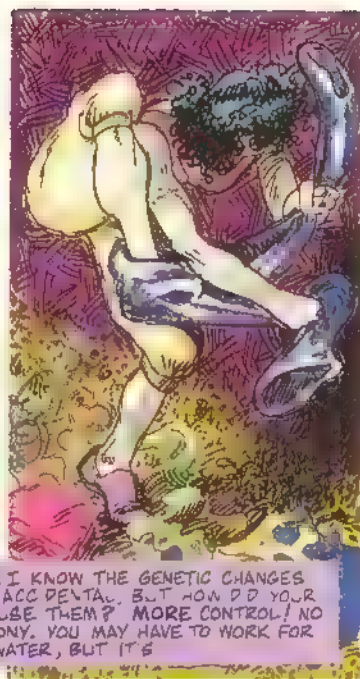
HEY, HARMONY, HARMONY, YOU'LL
FIND A WELL EASILY. THIS AREA
WAS SO BUILT UP, THERE'S
BOUND TO BE ONE NEAR.



AH, THERE'S ONE. DAMMIT,
NOW I'VE GOT TO BUST MY
ASS SO YOU CAN WET YOUR
T. ME, ALWAYS ME



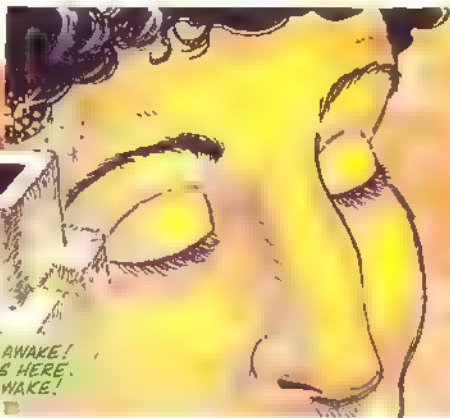
AW, POOR LIL' FIFTY-TWELVE.
DON'T GIVE ME THAT BRAN
SMELL. YOU'RE SO PRY YOU'VE
BEEN SUCKING YOUR SWEATY
STICKS FOR A WHILE. YOU
AND YOUR KIND WHO WANTED
TO CONTROL THE UNIVERSE,
NEVER ENDURE THE DAMAGE
FATE DECREED FOR OTHER
BEASTS. OH, NO, YOU HAD
TO BECOME MASTERS OF EVERY
PROCESS IN THE COSMOS



AN ANCIENT WELL. COLD, POWERFUL AURA...
OLDEST I'VE EVER SEEN. NO ONE'S BEEN
HERE FOR AGES. SILENT. DEAD

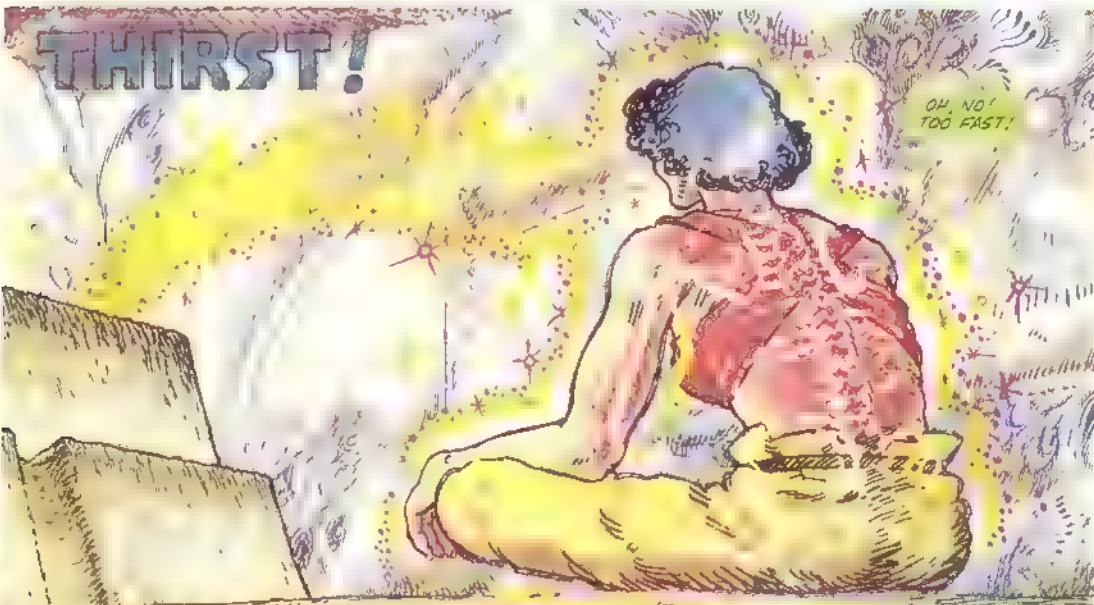


DEEP WELL OF MY FATHERS-- AWAKE!
THERE'S NEED OF YOUR WATERS HERE.
GIVE FORTH YOUR JUICES. AWAKE!



THIRST!

OH NO!
TOO FAST!





YES, YES! THIRST! AT LAST,
TO ME THE FLOW WARM AND
THICK, MOVING THROUGH
ITS VEINS...

FOR ME, ME, TO DRINK
OF ITSELF. THIRST DEEP.
SURGING FLOW PUMPING
IN AND OUT YES.
CLOSER...

THIRST
THIRST
THIRST

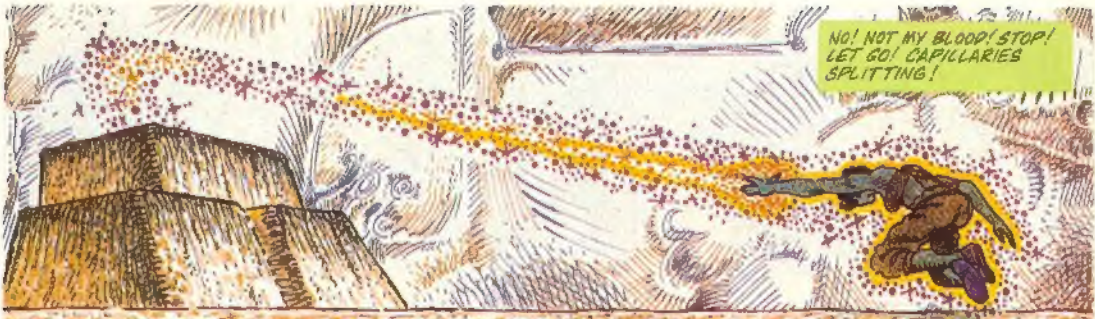
CLOSER CLOSER

YES, NOW, NEAR THE
WARM... CLOSER
CLOSER!

THIRST

NOW!!

NO!



NO! NOT MY BLOOD! STOP!
LET GO! CAPILLARIES
SPLITTING!

NO!

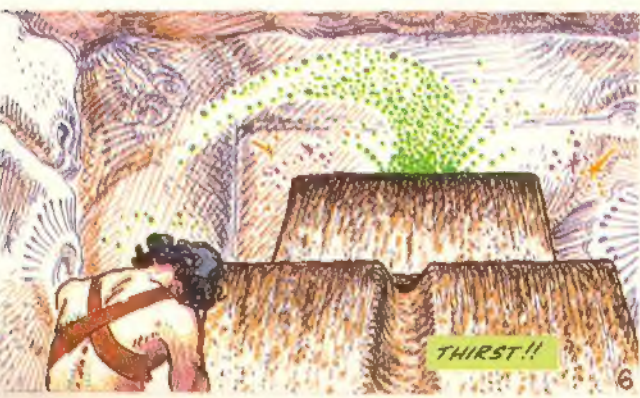
BALANCE! HARMONY.
YES, WHOLE-- NO
FRAGMENTS.
SEALED, WHOLE,
FLOWING YES.



GATHERING ALL FORCE CENTER,
KNITTING... PURGE THE
INVADER! OUT, OUT... WHOLE...



HEALED.



THIRST!!





I'VE WON.



QUICK, FIFTY!
FILL THE
FLASKS!



HURRY, FIFTY— BEFORE IT REVIVES! QUICK!

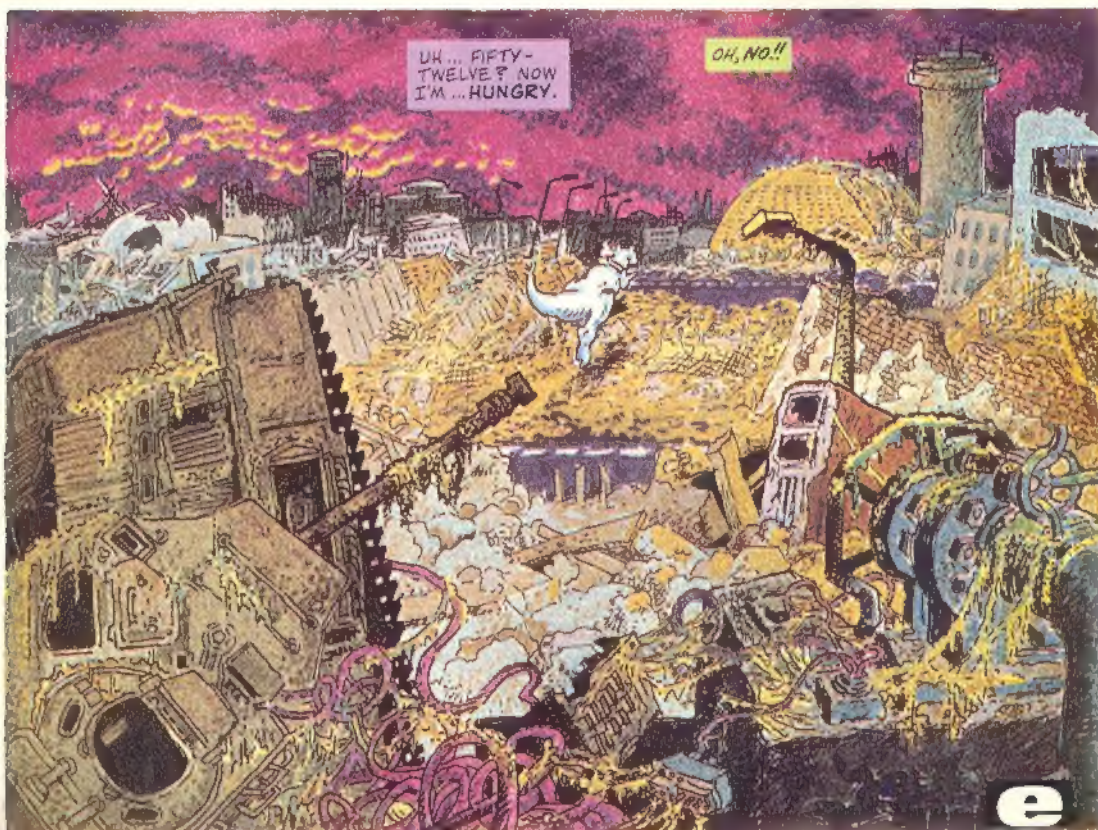


THAT WAS THE NEAREST
CALL EVER. THOUGHT
I'D LOST YOU.

UNTIL I HEALED
THOSE CAPILLARIES,
I THOUGHT SO, TOO.
I SHOULD HAVE
RESTED LONGER
BEFORE GOING IN.



WELL, RAJ, NEXT
TIME DON'T FORGET
THE JUICE PACK.
WE'LL BE SAFE IN
THE UNITED
SECTORS SOON.



UH... FIFTY-
TWELVE? NOW
I'M... HUNGRY.

OH, NO!!